

DOWN THE LINE

ISSUE 019 | OCTOBER 2016



XL & DBD

*This Isn't Your
Ordinary Everyday
Rap/Metal
Comeback...*

NATE ALLEN

BILL MALLONEE

BLAST FROM OBLIVION

CAST THE DRAGON

BRIAN GODAWA

BASEMENT TAPES

Human 2.7
Theo Obrastoff
Jon Jordan
Jim Wika
Eddie Parrino
And How
Straighteners &
Fasteners

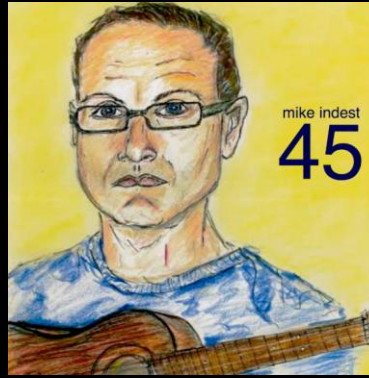
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Jeff Elbel (of Ping)
the b-attitudes
Western Grace (featuring
Jason Groff)
John Piccari
The Radiant Dreags
Dw Durnphy
Mike Indest

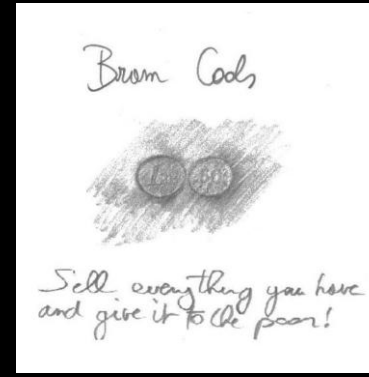


**BASEMENT
TAPES**



**THE
RADIANT
DREGS**

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With A Flip Lid

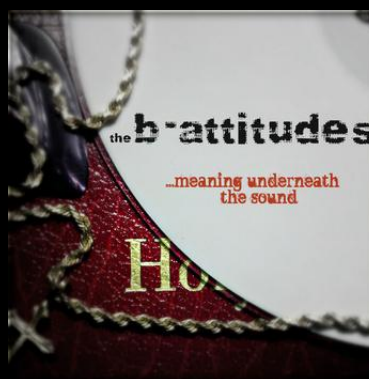


BROKEN

X

Free My Mind
Free My Mind
Free My Mind
Free My Mind
Free My Mind

eddie parrino



**STRAIGHTENERS
&
FASTENERS**

**NEEDLEROCK
SCISSORS
PAPER**

**ELECTRIC
NEON
PLASTIC**

**THE BLOODY
STRUNNERS**
RETURN OF THE HALCYON DAYS

**CAST THE
DRAGON**

DEMO 2015

**NEVER
ENDING
ROCK**

in this issue:

- XL & DBD 5
- NATE ALLEN 11
- BILL MALLONEE 15
- BLAST FRM OBLIVION 20
- CAST THE DRAGON 22
- BRIAN GODAWA 27
- REVIEWS 29

NEWS

see downthelinezine.com for these stories and more:

Galactic Cowboys Working on a New Album

The Blamed Return With Live Shows and a New EP in the Works

The Sweet Sorrows Release New Album, Raise Money for The Next

Platoon 1107 Announces *Tourettes* EP and Record Release Schedule

Los Angeles Hardcore Band Rapture Releases *Persevere* EP

Tom Gulotta Diagnosed with Brain Tumor

Bill Mallonee & The Big Sky Ramblers to Record *The Rags of Absence*

Autism Awareness, Acceptance and Research, a Benefit Compilation Vols. 1 and 2

The Hoax, Praiser and The Old-Timers release *Three Way Tie For Last* split

Hardcore Band Dangerous Minds to Release *Blood Diamonds* for OnTheAttack Records

Rose to Release New Album *Songs For The Ritually Abused*

Lo-Fidelity to Reissue *Homeboys* by Adam Again On Vinyl & CD

New Single Doug Burr single *Country Girls In City Dresses*

And How Releases New Album *Camouflage*

New Bram Cools Music and Announcement

Jeff Elbel + PING recording *The Threefinger Opera*

Cast The Dragon Release Demos

Chris Taylor Releases *Never Ending Now*

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— Ralph Winter, Producer (*X-Men*, *Wolverine*, *Planet of the Apes*)

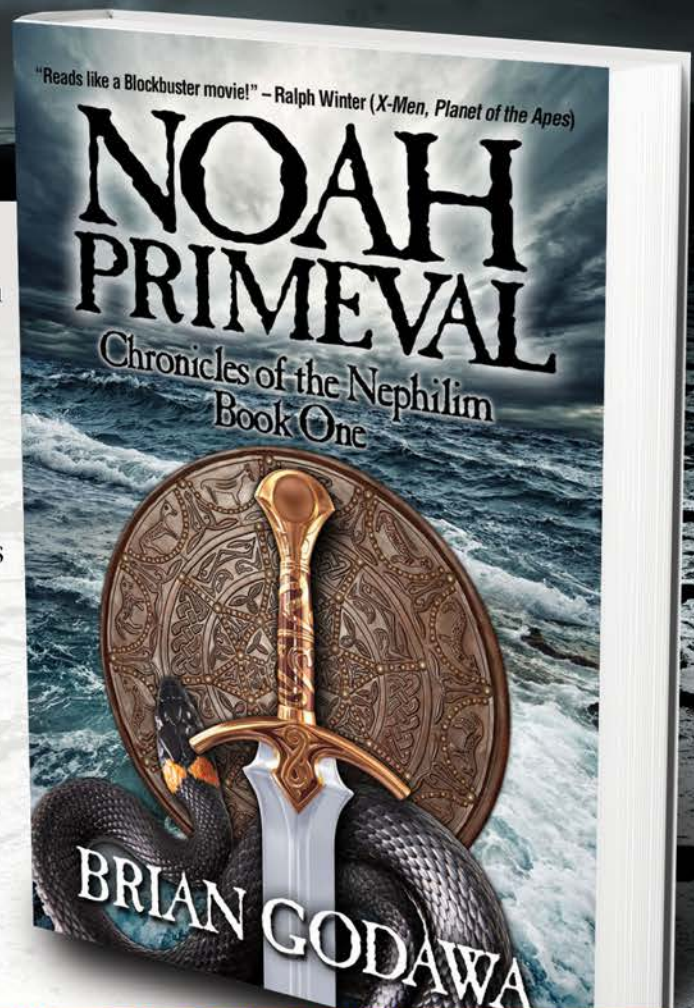
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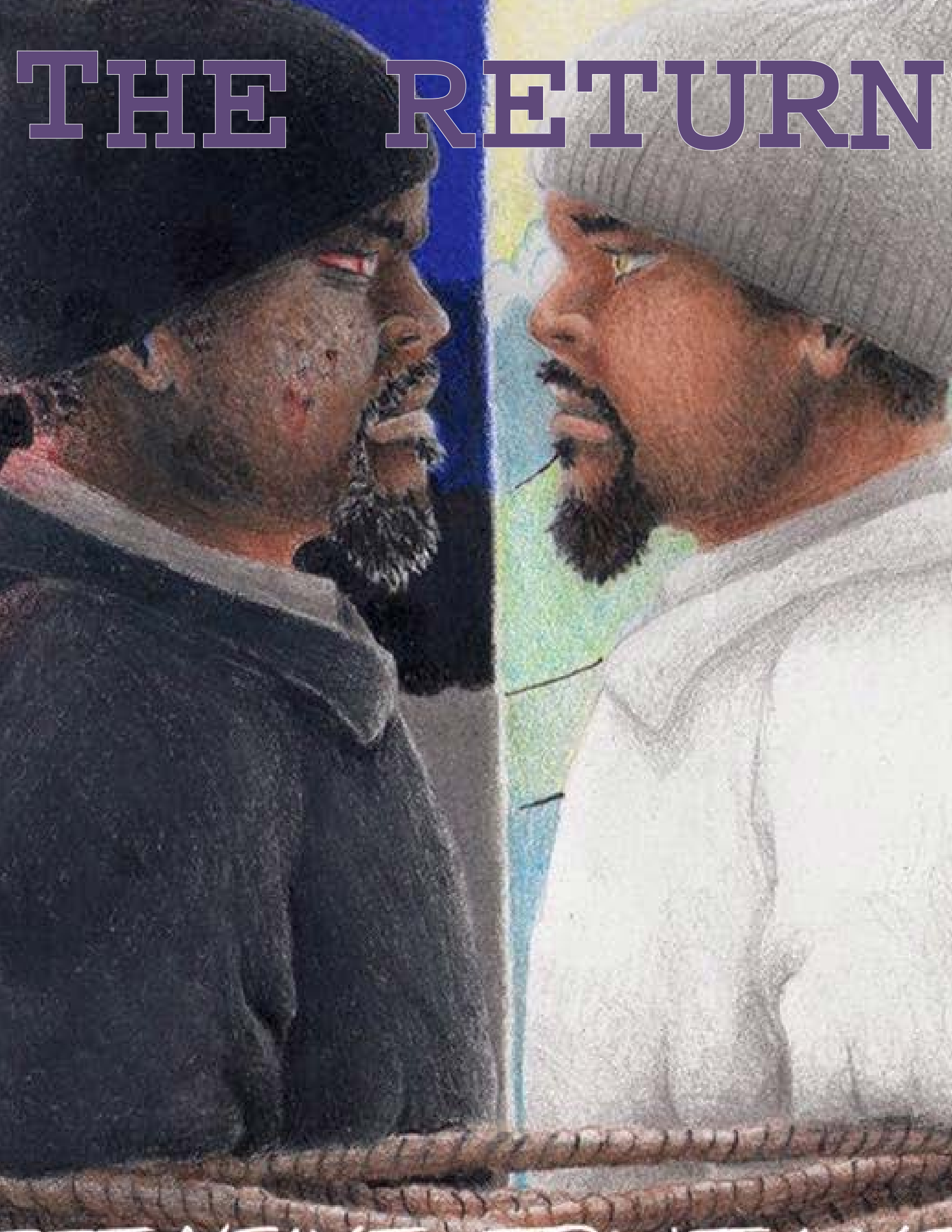
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THE RETURN

OF XL&DBD



An interview with Todd XL Stevens by Joshua Lory

In 1993, XL and Death Before Dishonor's debut album *Sodom and America* was in heavy rotation in my car stereo. There were only 2 other bands at that time that I can remember doing what would later be called RapCore, the other bands were the obscure MCM and the Monster and the infamous Rage Against the Machine. This was the direction I was trying to talk my own band into at the time, before the corporate beast grabbed it and released bands like Saliva and Limp Bizkit. P.O.D. breaking was the only thing good that came out of that scene - Korn had their moments - but I always felt they were biting Faith No More a bit. Todd Stevens aka XL has had a few releases since *Sodom and America* but nothing to the scale of the return of DBD and their two new albums *The Offensive Truth Volume 1 and 2*. It's been a blessing meeting an honest, pull no punches, brother in Yeshua like Todd.

Joshua Lory: When did you start playing music? What artists and people in your life influenced and inspired you to play music?

Todd XL Stevens: I was born into a musical family. All six members in my family had some type of musical talent. I started on the drums when I was 5 years old. At that time, my older brother, Tony Stevens (XL & DBD drummer) had a drum set. He also had an afternoon paper route, which gave me the opportunity to sneak and play his kit while he was gone. He would come home and notice something out of place every time, and he would be angry that I got on his drums. This went on until my parents were forced to get me my own kit. I was playing some of John Bonham's patterns perfectly by the age of seven. That's also the age that I began to pick up the guitar. I was still little enough that I could not play it correctly. So I would tune it to an open chord, lay it flat on my lap and use my thumb to play the chords. A couple of years later I got a bass guitar and started playing that the same way. By time I was 13 years old I was efficient on the drums, bass, and guitar and was playing anything that I wanted to. Led Zeppelin, Motley Crue, Rush, Iron Maiden, Prince, The Time, Judas Priest, Kiss, whatever. If I heard it, for the most part I was able to figure it out. That was the beginning of better things for me musically.

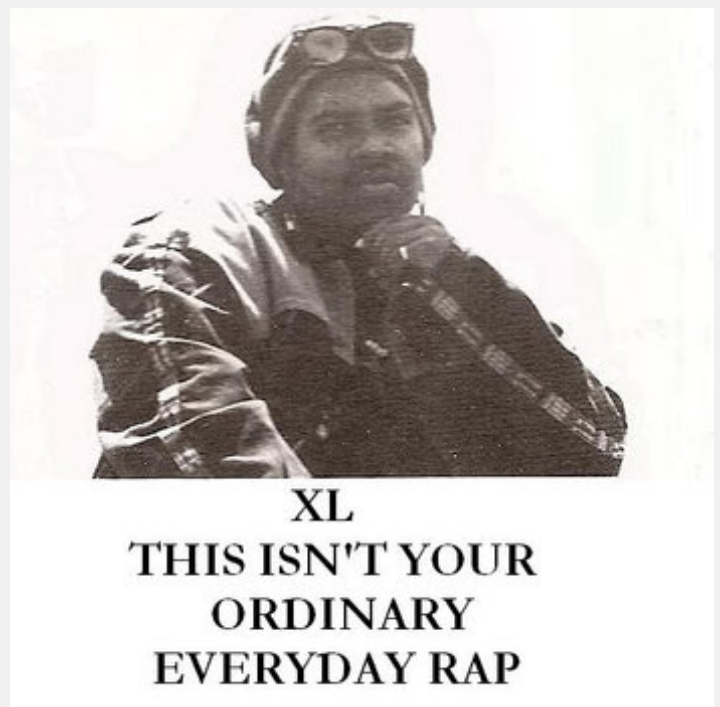
Did you grow up in a faith based household? When were you first moved by the Holy Spirit?

My father was a Christian for long as I could remember. Our family grew up going to church. My parents were very active in the church and sang quite often. I, on the other hand, was a rebel. Getting stoned right before church, acting inappropriately with the church girls, and things of that nature is how I was running most of my youth. But being raised by a God-fearing man and having all the people surrounding me that had me in their prayers, I came to my first true experience with the Lord in 1988. I was 17 years old then. And during that time my oldest

brother had given his life to the Lord the year prior and was walking very steady with God. His example of Christianity is what actually caught my attention and made me understand that it was more than just a useless routine. That first stretch of Christianity lasted for about three years before I backslid pretty hard.

When did you first get into Hip Hop? Who were your favorite Emcee's back then?

Around my house everyone was into music. Everybody had their own preference of music style. My oldest brother was the rocker; My other brother was into soul, funk, and rap when it first came out in 79. My older sister was into Barbra Streisand, The Carpenters, and Barry Manilow, while my parents listened predominately to old school Gospel. So there was a wide variety of music going on for me as the youngest in the house, and I liked it all. But my absolute favorite music as a child was hard rock and metal. I got into hip hop around 84 as a young teen and wore it out all through high school. I liked LL Cool J, NWA, Public Enemy, Ice T, EPMD, and many others. Ice Cube ended up being my all-time favorite rapper. It's kind of funny 'cause I have had over 300 people tell me I look like him.

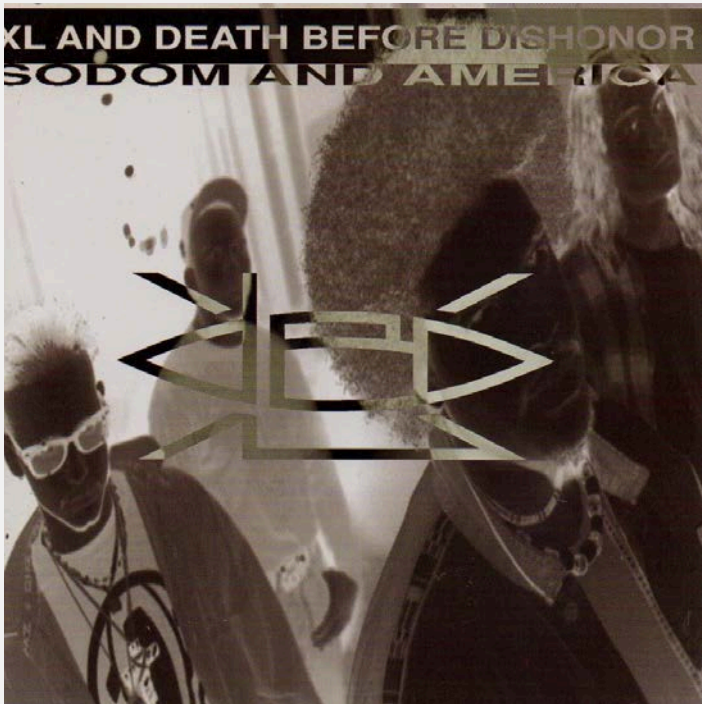


What's the history behind *This Isn't Your Ordinary Everyday Rap*? How did you meet guys like Bob Moon and Soup the Chemist? Was that album released on any scale? (I never knew about it until a few weeks ago, I'm a big fan and collector of old Holy Hip Hop so I was pretty thrilled to hear it!)

This Isn't Your Ordinary Everyday Rap was recorded both at my house and in a studio in Venice Beach. The recording I did in Venice Beach was from a dude who owned the studio named Caesar. He recorded me for free with hopes of releasing the

record. I'm not sure whatever came of that but only 200 copies were made. So later I combined songs that I did at my house on my eight track with that recording which was originally called *On the Smooth Tip*. Years down the road I made it available on BandCamp. Actually, my homey Matthew Lawrence hooked it up on BandCamp for me. Matthew is also a Christian rapper. The album includes some Christian rap all-stars such as Soup the Chemist, Gospel Gangstas, Dynamic Twins, DJ Cartoon, and DJ Dove. This little demo tape that I made actually landed me my deal with Brainstorm Records. Peace 586 delivered it to Joe Taylor and they decided to sign me.

I went to school with Bob Moon. I became a Christian when I was 17 and soon found out that Bob Moon had also become a Christian. We ran with a party crowd. Me and Bob didn't really hang out at all until we both found out that we were Christians. Bob and I were best friends for a period of time. We started a band called Willing Vessel and wrote a handful of songs that were good ones in my opinion. Bob's brother had a girlfriend who was Andre Walton's sister. Andre Walton was a professional Christian skater at that time. His skate soundtrack featured many Christian artists including Soldiers for Christ. So Bob knew these guys through Andre Walton and the Dynamic Twins, Peace 586, and Soup the Chemist would come and hang out at Bob's house sometimes. That's how I met these guys. I kicked it off the best with the Twins at first and started playing on their songs and as time went on I became friends with all of them. And ended up being a musician on all of their projects at some point.



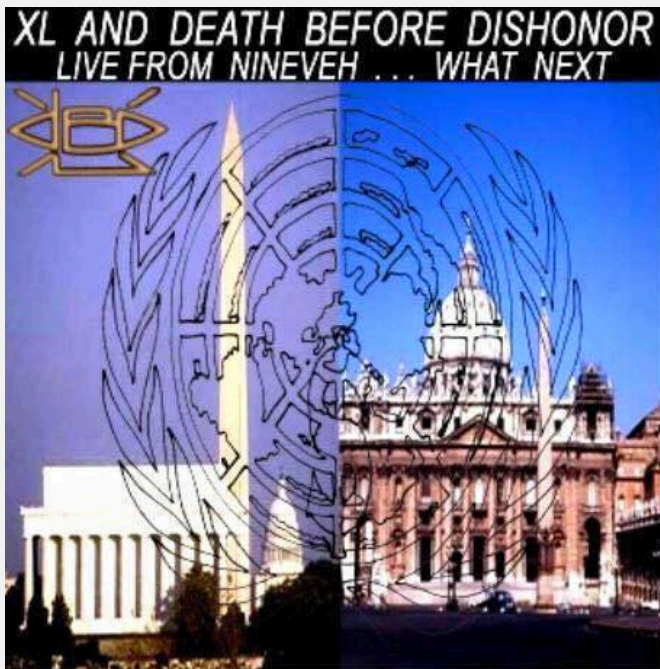
That leads us up to *Sodom and America*, what are your memories, about the recording of this album?

When Brainstorm Records decided to sign me I was originally supposed to do a hip hop project. Soup the Chemist was going to produce me. I had come up with about 18 songs and Soup had helped to produce a majority of them. While we were working on this record, I was in the lab brewing up some XL & DBD type of material. About two weeks before I was set to go into the studio I showed a song to Gene Eugene. He liked it so much that he said "let's do this stuff" even though my deadline to record was in two weeks. Not to worry though because I already had a lineup of songs ready to go. At first some of my hip hop counterparts didn't really know what to think of it, because you know no one was really doing that style of music at that time. It kind of brought about a separation from some of us. But at the same time introduced me to a lot of friends in the metal crowd. Jimmy Brown was in the studio with me all the time and I believe that Gene Eugene created such a buzz about the project that there was so many people hanging out in the studio at all times. Members from EDL, the Tunnel Tats, Poetic Lee, the Dynamic Twins, The Crucified, members from Adam again, etc. it truly was a revolutionary event in time and Christian music.

Any stories of Gene Eugene you would like to share?

I wouldn't say that Gene and I were close friends. We were cool with each other whenever we saw each other, but we weren't real tight. I was in the studio for five weeks. I recorded my parts pretty fast. Gene respected me musically and was always willing to hear any new music I had. He even asked me to play in Adam again once. His bass player had an issue that came up. He was maybe going to quit the band. So I was able to rehearse with them including that awesome black drummer from White Heart, I think his name was John. That was a cool time. Being able to play with Adam again, they were a great band. Brainstorm asked me to do a second record. At first I was going to do so, but I kind of freaked out on Joe Taylor when he wouldn't give me a front of money that I thought he was going to do. Looking back in hindsight it was very stupid of me. But at that time my whole walk was not a good one. I was in a backslide and was making dumb choices. I miss Gene like everyone else, he was a great guy and he made my album sound the best. We put out something revolutionary.





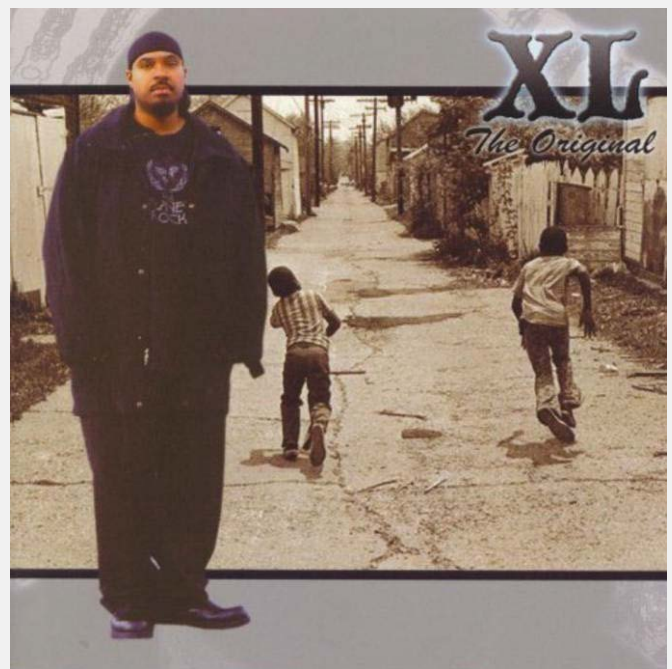
You released a second XL and DBD titled *Live from Nineveh... What Next?* in 2001, what was happening between the release of *Sodom and America* and *Live from Nineveh*?

In 1994 I think I already mentioned that Brainstorm wanted to do another record with me, but in hindsight I feel I made a foolish decision by telling Joe Taylor that I did not want to do it. I played with the band from 1994 until 1996 and we kept trying to get a secular deal with DreamWorks, Warner Bros. etc. Doug Shumway was my bass player he was on *Sodom and America*'s cover. Mike Nichols (RIP) was my drummer. And Bryan Jay (from the rock band Keel) was my lead guitarist. We played a handful of shows in the Southern California area but nothing ever came, to much avail. It was in 1996 that I decided to move from Southern California to Iowa where my older brothers were living. I settled down there for a couple years before my brothers and I took up the cause again with XL and DBD. Before hooking up with my brothers I believe the main reason why my band was not being successful had much to do with the fact that there was a specific call on my life from the Heavenly Father and I was neglecting it by living in areas of blatant sin. During those years I was quite bitter from the condition of my marriage, from my career being in a status of failure, and I took the wrong path resorted back to partying. But from 1998 until 2001 my walk was back on track and XL & DBD was heading towards better things. That was right before the release of *Live from Nineveh*. I suppose it is not best to call it a release since we only put out 1000 units. But if the Lord decides to bless this new project maybe that will become a collector's item.

In 2005 you returned with a straight rap release titled *XL The Original* - was this on a label or self-released?

The hip hop CD *XL The Original* was released on the label called Game Plan Records. It was owned by Dave Portillo aka Raps

Galore of 12th Tribe. That label was a subsidiary label of 4th Man Records owned by Jason Neville aka Fros't. They were distributed by P.G.E. distribution. It was one of the sweetest deals I ever had. We were in all of the record and CD stores at that time. But it was short-lived because something happened with the distribution company. In short, 22 labels got robbed by the distributor. He took the money and ran. Straight disappeared. I only had 11 returns on my record which means pretty much everything sold. But I didn't get a red cent because of this distribution company. I also was able to start up a label which was a subsidiary of these record companies called Resilient Sowndz. I signed 4 bands and three of them made it into the stores and suffered the same fate. So I never really did much promotion for that record, in fact I still have like four boxes of CDs in my closet.



What was happening between the release of *XL The Original* and your upcoming two volume album *The Offensive Truth*? What sparked an interest in doing another XL & DBD release?

2005 until 2010 was a really bumpy time in my life. My marriage was in a phase of vacillation. I had an internal bitterness going on with my lack of success in music. And my walk with the Lord had periods of highs and lows. Overall I was not consistent as a Christian. I was battling a losing bout with alcohol as well. I played with a few bands during those years. One was a screamo band called Exodus Complex. Another was a rock band called the Lady Blue. That was a local band and I am with a phenomenal lead singer named Tina Haas Findley. And I toured with a secular band called Radio Moscow. Was their drummer. They were one of the best bands I've ever played with. Just this last year their latest album was reviewed in Rolling Stone magazine. They also had songs in the movie called *The Goods*. As well as a song in a RadioShack commercial featuring Lance Armstrong. I toured with them from 2007–2009. Part of the tour was with a band

called Witchcraft from Sweden. It was a dark time for me. Late 2009 until late 2010 was one of the worst times of my life I was sick physically, sick mentally and definitely dying spiritually. My wife and I were split up. My family was split up and I had become an unemployed hermit essentially. It was in July 2010 that I rededicated my life to the Lord and was able to get back with my family three months later. I've stayed fired up since that day and the Lord has slowly brought my ministry back. I am a pastor now and my mindset is all about "onward and upward." And finally in 2015 the Lord open the doors for XL and Death Before Dishonor to make a comeback.



What can people expect lyrically and musically with the new releases? Who are the guest musicians on the new album?

The new releases are called *Offensive Truth* simply because that's most likely what will happen. People may get offended by the blatant truth in my albums. I discuss rape, molestation, the

ills of the upper echelon corporations, and my personal experience with methamphetamine. I talk in detail about the things that almost destroyed my marriage, I give an overall testimony from the time I was 8 years old to current. There's a song that puts down the male mentality of using a woman simply for pleasure and not giving the respect due. There is a song called "The Wrath to Come" that talks about the written judgment that is coming on this earth. And those are just songs off of *Volume 1*. There's an awesome lineup of special guests on this album, The guitar players are Oz Fox from Stryper and Bloodgood, Rex Carroll of Whitecross and King James, and Greg Minier from the Crucified. The guest drummer line up consists of Jim Chaffin from the Crucified; Jesse Sprinkle who has played with Demon Hunter as well as Dead Poetic and many others; Joel Goodwin who has played piano with Walter Hawkins, the gospel great, and has done production for Crystal Lewis (he actually played the drums on my CD - piano is his masterpiece instrument but he is not too shabby on the drums as well); and finally my brother Anthony Stevens is on a couple of tracks as well. He has been XL & DBD's drummer since 1998. So there are five other drummers on the CD's. And the other 15 songs feature XL on the drum kit. There was a possibility of some old-school Christian emcees appearing on the record but it just didn't pan out.

Do you plan on playing out live for the new albums?

Yes we plan on playing live. Problem is I need to put together a complete band. I figured that would be easier after the album drops and people knew that I was once again a presence. Rex Carroll said he'd tour with me, and Jesse Sprinkle said he would tour with me. I've got some people here in my state that I could put on board but ultimately praying to God for the right band. My go to drummer is my brother Anthony, but he is a professor in college so if the schedule does not work right then I would be getting a different drummer.

What would you like to tell us about your Church and ministry?

I currently attend cornerstone Church in Boone Iowa. I started going there in August 2012 because they had asked me to be their worship leader. I am now a licensed pastor at that church still doing worship and working with the youth group. I have brought my two brother's families to that church. My older brother Anthony who has played with XL & DBD since 1998 is the drummer for the praise band there. It is a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. I'm currently in school to become ordained. As I said before right now I just have a provisional license which means I can preach from the pulpit, do weddings, do funerals, etc. My vision there is to see it grow, for people to become more holy, righteous, and fired up for Jesus.

xltoddstevens.bandcamp.com

www.xlanddbd.com





NATE ALLEN

Nate Allen has a new solo outing with a full band backing him as well as a new acoustic album. A lot has happened since DTL spoke with him last, so without further a due, let's catch up.

Joshua Lory: It's been a while since DTL last interviewed you, can you tell us what you've been up to in the time between *With Our Powers Combined* and now?

Nate Allen: A lot has changed.

When *Power* came out I was finishing up college in Portland, Oregon and taking stupid amounts of credits between tours. I was also firmly a work-a-holic, striving very hard to win people's approval by playing more rock n' roll shows than just about anyone... At the same time I was burning out and feeding my stress addiction.

In 2013/14 I basically pulled the brake on my constant movement and touring and forced myself to slow down. This meant finding a job that made me be in once space and moving to Kansas City where rent is cheap and we can afford our own place.

This has been healthy on many levels and allowed me to deal with some very shaky motivations.

After taking a good amount of time to reset. I finally will be getting back in the van and begin proper touring in October (*Ed note: this is a 2015 interview – sorry for the delay!*). Fortunately I believe my motivation and purpose are a-lot clearer now - it's like my windshield has been cleaned off in many ways.

That's awesome to gain that focus. Was it hard leaving the music scene of Portland behind? How is your local scene in KS?

Yes. It was so hard to leave. We've been grieving off and on since we left. It felt like were just on the verge of some exciting things. Oregon is home to me so going out in Portland meant seeing friends I've known for years.

Kansas City has a lot to offer but it's taken some getting used to. I've started to refer to KC as a hidden treasure. People often skip it on tour but the more we've gotten to know people the more we like it here.

What can you tell us about the new album, music and lyrical direction?

Musically and lyrically *Take Out the Trash* definitely pushed me into new directions. I would say musically it's the first

album since my Destroy Nate Allen debut (in 2006) where I was able to record every sound in my head for an album. This time around the recording quality is much better and I was able to have the perfect folks play along with me (including Tyson Kingrey on drums and Dennis Childers formerly of Insomniac Folklore, Flock 14 and one show for Larry Norman on bass).

Lyrical I wrote the album in a stretching season. My eyes were being opened to how privileged and ignorant I have been simply because of my skin color and small-town upbringing. I was also struggling with burnout, unemployment, and becoming more aware of my work-a-holic tendencies.... I'm a pretty sensitive guy so as these things impacted me songs were forced out... that I'm very proud of every track but they can be a hard to sing or explain at times.

I'm pretty confident that *Take Out the Trash* is my most complete recording to date but it is a humble offering of suggestions rather than a this is what you should do album. The first line of the "Open to Everything" which kicks the album off is "hating myself for what I have done" and the record ends with the song "Goodbye Letter" - a somber song about moving on and loss. These definitely aren't the feel-good Destroy Nate Allen tunes I'm known for but I believe they contribute to conversations that need to happen.

Will your next tour be full band, just you acoustic, or Destroy Nate Allen? Will it be as long as tours from the past? Where do you plan on going this round?

My next tour will be just me acoustic through the Midwest. We'll doing some Destroy Nate Allen dates later this year and then I'll be doing more solo touring. I might play some select full bands shows but nothing in scheduled at this point.

The tours I'm working on are around a month at a time. I doubt we'll ever do another 6 month tour but strangers things have happened.

You had a successful Kickstarter funding the vinyl release of your new album *Take Out the Trash*, where can people find this and your other releases?

Take Out the Trash is available on all digital outlets, in a bunch of record stores, or you buy it directly from us at on thepacawaydots.bandcamp.com, iamnateallen.com.

Any plans for your next album? Will it be with Pacaway Dots or Destroy Nate Allen, or something else? Is there any style you never tried and wanted to?

I'm not sure what our / my next release will be. We're

causally writing for Destroy Nate Allen and I'm always writing songs. I've probably got at least another album or two close to ready to record.

Is *Distortion Changes Everything* a companion album to *Take Out the Trash*?

The albums share many songs. *Distortion* is very much a collection of acoustic B-sides and demos from *Take Out the Trash*. That being said there are a few tracks on it I very much enjoy and I am particularly stoked on the artwork.

(I was pretty much done with the interview, I had sparked a conversation with Nate about church and things happening to them and the members, anyway, I thought I'd share this portion with you all.)

Always have a curiosity when churches start out a certain way and a shift happening, it happened to the one I grew up in, I have theories what happened at mine, but it's dark stuff that can't be proven, just the players involved it would make sense. It scared me enough that I've never been able to go back or find anything trust worthy.

I think organizations that take a negative slide are heartbreaking... especially because so many people are harmed along the way. To me it's a sin problem that general secrecy and shame perpetuates. I think independent churches are particularly susceptible because it's SUPER easy for a pastor to be judge, jury, and final say on a lot of things.

I know I'm pretty suspicious of many Christian activities. A little over a year ago I realized I had been the victim of spiritual abuse - which explains so much. I call it death by 1000 cuts because I was hurt by many things over many years (I actually talked on this at Audiofeed). The effects of the abuse made me very suspicious to pretty much anything "church/christian" related until I really didn't want to anything to do with the structures or people. I think the paradox exists in that the healing that I need and needed come from other Christians... so being open to wise counsel and good support are essential.

So that being said I really value the church in its capacity to love while at the same time realizing it's very easy for people to wound each other in their ideas of doing good - which is all relative to our experience. Over the past few years I've moved into a space where I have more respect for Catholic / Anglican & Orthodox Churches. From at least my perspective they seem to be doing the best at building solid structures that facilitate good leadership and ongoing community.

I'll be addressing some of these abuses on upcoming albums... at least one which will be a continuation of *Take*

Out the Trash... in that's I'll be working through my more personal junk and inviting others to do the same. That (yet to be named or recorded album) will probably just me and a guitar getting low and singing softly.... in a way I was not able to do every really due up until recently because I was so anxious and wound up - in part from the spiritual abuse... that I really didn't know why I couldn't physically slow down.

destroynateallen.com





To attempt to introduce someone as prolific as Bill Mallonee is a tall order. This treasure to the soul-tested amongst us is but an inspiration. He churns out depth-filled albums faster than most of us can change the toilet paper rolls in our bathroom. (If you do not believe me, time it next time.)

You will know Bill's reputation as songwriter within the best of the Americana-Roots music tradition. If you are not privy or lost touch with the demise of Vigilantes of Love, then let this here serve as a snapshot into the passion Bill continues to grace us with.

This interview idea started out around nine months ago when Bill sent me a copy of his *Lands & Peoples* CD. For those of us that recall the circular black objects that play when needle hits them, these songs of *Lands & Peoples* come in that format too.

A few months went by and I sent Bill some questions (yeah, I know, I know.) Naturally, Bill was writing his next album. By the time this interview was winding up, Bill was a couple albums ahead, along with working on his wife's album. Visit this site: billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com and feast upon the array of fine music that he crafts day after day, year after year.

As far as this interview is concerned, Bill was that finely tuned muscle car to my road construction crew on union hours, working on a beat up highway all too slow. The highway got it's much needed pavement job, and Bill got to tear it up with style while lamenting how friggin' slow it was to fix.

Don't get me wrong. Bill is a gracious soul and the real deal. I hope you enjoy this glimpse of a life well-lived that is Bill Mallonee.

—Doug Peterson

What book or piece of music has inspired the way you perceive the world lately, and why?

Great question, Doug. There's really two main rivers of inspiration for me, I think.

1. I see myself primarily as an Americana artist. Whether it's full band rock & roll or the more fragile, vulnerable approach of an acoustic guitar, the music I've written and recorded through 65 albums over the last 25 years has its roots in what's called "the American Experience."

The stirrings of what's beneath the soul of that experience, particularly the stories & histories of those who "fell through the cracks," has attracted me over and over again. America: It's a ragged, variegated history.

One of heroes & hucksters; of charity and sacrifice; of greed and shame.

The "stuff" of our very selves. All of it, "fair game" for my songs. Add a noble dose of my own melancholic temperament, and you get what I do.

2. The other inspiration? Well, what I'm about to say, I don't say to "garner points" with some sort of Christian sub-culture. It's my faith, not necessarily my agenda. One hopes that whatever faith or code a person lives by, is a vital, living faith.

And so, for me it's the working out of a relationship with Christ, whom I believe to be "alive & at large." That's the beginning and end of it.

But, as I said, that's my faith. Not necessarily my agenda when I pick up a guitar or write a song. Good writing, I believe, comes from a very personalized point of reference.

It's NOT "propaganda" centered. It certainly isn't egotistical capitalism with some spiritual "wu-wu" ornamenting it.

Writing a song is just telling the truth to one's self. Drawing one's emotions & perspectives and impressions from a deep well.

Me? In a way, I write to save myself, to make sense of this incongruous thing we call Life.

Unfortunately, when it comes to "artists of faith" and their "artistry," the commercial conduits (and they *are* primarily commercial in the worst sense of the word) for expression in that particular sub-culture strike me as rather narrowly defined. Most of that cultural ghetto's manifestations I ignore.

I try to distance myself from it. I think we can all agree that the so-called "American church" has some serious blind spots when it comes to aesthetics....

3. But to get back to the question of the 2nd part of what inspires me?

I wrestle with the documents. I wrestle with the Scriptures. I wrestle with Christianity. I wrestle with Jesus Christ, his Person and His Work. I search my heart about how I am to respond in this day of soul-numbing modernity. In all honesty?

The Faith has to be the greatest Hope the world has ever heard. I wrestle with its claims and its claims on me. Yes, my music and my writings have always been full of these struggles and wranglings.

But, I hope, they have never been "preachy."

In the today's world, I think people are more devoid of "Hope" than ever before.

So, I do hope folks who dive into my work come up with some hope that is sober and real.

We're all starving for it.

I write to give voice to the yearnings and the questions that remain unanswered in my own spirit.

I live and create pretty much as a hermit these days. I left the Athens, GA music scene about 7 years ago. This was after having lived in the community for 30 years; Eventually, I found it just like all scenes that thrive on a "hipper-than-thou," "next-big-thing" dynamic. Such scenes are, to my ears anyway, often over-rated, an insider's game and just a bore.

Me? All I can offer is "tried & true." And with 65-plus albums I can offer a lot of "tried & true."

Our thing never went down well in Athens. Neither myself nor Vigilantes of Love ever had a home to come home there, even though our national press everywhere else was fantastic. (Atlanta was far more embracing!) Getting out was the best decision I ever made. The music has flowed almost unabated at the pace of 3-4 records a year.

Books?

Here's a few. I re-visit Frederick Buechner's books frequently, particularly *Godric*, *Brendan* and *The Hungering Dark*. You'll not likely find an author who wrestles with the concept of God's seeming absence in the world and yet it is a world charged with a hallowed-ness and a yearning that suggests that beauty, grace and God Himself are in and around it all...

The poetry of Pablo Neruda. A wondrous universe of perceptions, image, sound and feeling. "Residence Earth" is the place to start. "Isla Negra" (a notebook) is a fantastic compendium of his work... just a joy.

Most folks know my love of Jack Kerouac. His life, his work, even his failings have been part of my fascination with his life and art. I've probably written 30 songs that reference the spirit of his work directly or indirectly. "Desolation Angels" and "Dharma Bums" still read well.

Last but not least: John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath." Probably the greatest American novel. Ever. As fresh as today. It frames the plight of the poor in hallowed images and the language Steinbeck's characters employ has the ring of truth. Courage in the face of harsh fate. The whole

"dust bowl" ethos that I've "conjured" through-out the last 15 albums owes a great deal to that book.

I look at the albums you've done in the last 15 years or so, and it has troubadour written all over it. Do you see yourself as a poet musician, and what compels you to keep making music that speaks to the heart of the world-weary and troubled in spirit? These themes come up in much of your work.

Sure. I guess I'm a high-desert-singer-songwriter-poet-troubadour...

(Perhaps, I'd add "freak" to that description, as well!)

Maybe only crazy people follow such uncertain paths? You gotta understand that there's no safety net under any of this. There hasn't been one since 1997 when our little indie deal with Capricorn records was done. They helped us make *Struggleville*, *Blister Soul* and *Slow Dark Train*. All nationally well-received albums. We toured, as a band, for 10 years. Critic's darlings, but never breaking big. C'est la vie.

BUT: I did get to see, smell, touch and taste this great country. As a troubadour, the road gave me (and still gives me) a window into the hearts of the people who call it "home."

You're allowed to "get inside" their struggles, their griefs, their joys and their hopes...

That's a tremendous honor and gift. Their courage is amazing.

I would not trade those experiences for the world. And so I've lived, more or less, on the road for almost all of my 25 years career thus far. In a day and age when so much new Americana music sounds like "paint-by-numbers" music to me, I like to think those "aged" experiences I was privileged to go through lend an authenticity to what I say and how I say it in my work.

There's some other specifics: I think the way I've learned let the lyric delivery contour with the certain spirit of the song (as opposed to just mouthing a bunch of lyrics) is what makes one a good singer songwriter. I learned to enjoy that in my own work more & more. Maybe it's just a maturation thing.

The vocal nuances make each song an adventure to explore when recording them...

You commented a while ago in the Mark Heard internet group that Mark would have been appalled by the referencing of the CCM machinery that is often associated with his name and musical catalogue. You said some bold

and powerful statements. But let me ask you.... if you were to write a book about this very topic, addressing where Mark Heard was at in his plague of having started on the cusp of CCM and never completely punching his way out of that mold, what would the preface of that book look like?

Well, this is how it sounds to my ears: Mark Heard's last three records were the groaning of a man who torn the cover off the book of his heart. I think that meant being free of the past to a certain extent. Mark was in the process of re-inventing himself; of "throwing caution to the wind." I think it meant being able to mine a different vein of inspiration musically and lyrically. More angsty. More immediate. Gone the formulas, gone the "buzz" language. Gone the second guessing that over producing sometimes makes for.

Nope: What you get is hard-core, raw-bone honesty. Some of the most compelling rock & folk/rock I ever heard. Mark arrived a true national treasure. Mark "grew up" as an artist. I'm not sure many of his fans did. It's my hope that folks immersed in the ghetto will "see the light" and perhaps start venturing out and listening to music that's "less safe."

But, I'm lapsing into an academic discussion here. Mark Heard was a true artist. Not a "propagandist," or someone proffering easy musical/spiritual bromides. He was blazing trails. Making great songs aimed at an aesthetically starved Christian sub-culture.

What is it that drives you to make 4-7 good albums in a year, when most musicians can only maybe put out one or two works annually? What the hell is that which drives you?

LOL! Heck, I wish I knew...I'm releasing something like album #67 next month (*Slow Trauma*). Me? I think they just get better.

What to say? The songs keep coming unabated. I think the last 15-20 albums are the best things I've ever done. They just feel "honest & right."

It took me a spell, but I've learned how to operate digital recording devices now; I can write a body of songs and record them very quickly. I don't wanna lose anything, if I can.

You may ask: "Aren't 4-5 albums a year "over-saturation?"

No. I don't see it that way. What I do is just outside "commercial superstructures."

Labels that say stuff like: "Well, you should just release one

record every 3 years."

"Horse-hocky," I say.

Picasso didn't wait to paint until the time was right. He just painted, worked non-stop.

So did Kerouac as a writer and Neruda, as a poet. Good writers write every day. It's really that simple. So there ya' go...

My wife, Muriah, & I have no superstructure surrounding this lil "cottage industry." And yes, that is scary. But, I do think our records are beautiful examples of gritty, heart-felt Americana. The body of songs exploring the issues of the American experience, and the issues of faith under the siege of modernity. We have very few resources, so we just trust our gut when it comes to songs. You learn what your strengths are and you play to them.

I *do* happen to think that I have the BEST, and i mean the BEST fans in the world. I have over 65 albums and many of those fans have every one of them.... What a group of good hearts, eh? ;-)

What kind of projects are you envisioning in the next while?

Well, I've gotten quite used to the whole process of writing and tweaking and recording. I play all the parts on the records. Muriah delivers wonderful harmonies, keyboard and string arrangements. We have this great working relationship in the studio, in addition to the marriage. She is a joy and a blessing. And a great songwriter in her own right.

Well, this brand new record, *SLOW TRAUMA*, releases in mid-March. It's been finished since last December, really. I learned lap steel over the last year. It's such an expressive instrument, so it makes some nice appearances on the new album!

Slow Trauma is very much a record about death. Sounds morose, I know, but it's not.

It's actually very sweet, very sober and hopeful.

Two of the themes through the last few albums are that of Grieving & Loss; We have lost so many friends in the past few years. Good folks who just left too soon. So, a collection of songs that dug into that idea how fragile Life is and our mortality seemed appropriate.

I write about 40 songs a year and when the songs start gathering around certain themes I like to keep them all

together as more of a "concept record."

Also, I write a lot of prose, so I've been having great fun tweaking themes via liner notes for many of the last 10 albums and publishing them through my little WordPress site. (I recently tweaked & re-published an essay on the shortest verse in the Bible which is "Jesus wept." It's called "In Tenderness & in Tears," and it's about Jesus before Lazarus's tomb. It's a something of a Holy week/Easter "homily.")

We are also finishing up Muriah's solo album. Fantastic. It's called *Beneath the Clay*. Looks to be 7-9 songs in all. I am incredibly excited about it.

Muriah writes and anchors the characters in her songs in time & place in a way that's simply arresting and beautiful. I know I'll be accused of bias, but I honestly believe that even if I didn't know her, I would be totally taken by her songs and her way of delivering them. Stand by for *Beneath the Clay*!

What of your recent works just released can you speak proud of?

Hard question! Since moving to the high deserts of New Mexico, the songs have just shown up pretty fast & furious. I spend so much time thinking about what songs are supportive of each other and what themes bolster each other. The recent albums from say 2011 onward gave felt very focused and realized. I think they hold up.

So, to enumerate (for your readers) I think *The Power & The Glory*, *Dolorosa*, *Amber Waves*, *Future Hymns for the New Idolatry*, *Winnowing* and last year's *Lands & Peoples* would be my choices.

They each say what I wanted to say in the way I wanted to say it...

That's really one of the benefits to having the home studio, writing a lot and handling almost all the instruments. I have my "style" of playing guitars, bass, drums and harmonica. I've added lap steel and dulcimer to my roster of instruments. So, with Muriah's very emotive keyboards and vocals, we have many bases covered. Obviously my voice is what is called a "character" voice. I work hard on lyrics. Together, I guess, they're the "stamps" that identify me.

After that, one can just let the flow of songs happen and then sort them out. You get to see which one's "play well together."

And what can we anticipate in the near future?

Seeing where the next batch of songs lead. I have about 20 written and they seem to be leaning towards something like a folk record. But who knows? It could turn out like a garage album by the time it's done.... ;-)

billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com

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BLAST FROM OBLIVION

Interviewed by Joshua Lory

Horror punk is one of my favorite sub genres of punk rock. It's the "Red headed step child," so to say, that corporate greed has yet to spoil it. These bands are few and far between, which means fewer that can call Christ savior. Blast from Oblivion is a new solo outing from Splatter Guts out on the SkyBurnsBlack label and not the usual Horror Punk outing.

Joshua Lory: When did you start playing music? Was there a certain band that inspired you to get into playing?

Splatter Guts: I started really young. Around 8 years old playing various instruments. I couldn't choose just one. I liked changing it up. There wasn't a certain band that really got me to start playing. I just loved music and wanted to play to create something original.

On the album you play drums, bass, and guitar. What is your favorite instrument to play?

When recording various instruments it's a pain in the gut! I try to be as perfect with every instrument when in the studio. So it takes a lot of time & stress when recording each instrument. But... Just to play in general & have fun I'd probably say Drums. It releases a lot of stress & anger when I have it (Laughs). Playing live I like to be the front man. I can get a crowd going & I love doing it.

What is your studio set up?

I'm old school! No computer crap! I love digital. I have a 8 track MRS:802B ZOOM Recorder & it's fantastic. It has a lot of great effects. I hook up my Behringer 16 track Europower 3000 mixing board to it & record through that. The mixer also has a lot of cool effects. It's easy for me to work with & comes out sounding beautiful. You just gotta know what you're doing.

Describe your recording process, do you start with click, drums, guitar?

Well, with the *To Hell & Back* album it was random. I had a few drum tracks I laid down & wrote to that. Then I had great guitar riffs I tracked & just worked off of that. I pretty much made it up as I went. I played what I felt & what sounded original & went with it. There's a lot of different things you can do when writing & recording. I'll probably go in a different direction with this next album I'm doing. Recording wise.

How did you hook up with Joshua and Sky Burns Black Records?

I was on the lookout for a label. Zvi Tacussis from bands Diamoth & Black Leather recommended Sky Burns Black Records. I contacted Josh & sent him my music & ideas. He added me to his label & everything just took off from there.

Where did you pull lyrical inspiration for *To Hell & Back*?

To Hell & Back is about Horror! Horrors dealing with Drugs, Alcohol, Hate, Anger, & much more. It all relates to past experiences.

Do you have a favorite genre of Horror movie?

A Favorite Genre of Horror or Favorite Horror Movie? I wouldn't say I have a favorite genre of Horror. I Love all horror except paranormal & a lot of newer horror movies coming out. Favorite Horror Movie? (Laughs) Can't choose just one. I'll name you a few.... Evil Dead Trilogy, The Wolf Man, Hellraiser, The Invisible Man, The Last Man On Earth, Re-Animator, Hatchet, Tales From The Crypt Show, Creepshow, the original Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, & many more.

Where did the band name come from? Where did the name Splatter Guts come from?

Blast from Oblivion has transformed into something more than it originally was. It is something so unreal & extraordinary. There are many thoughts that appear in the mind. Where they come from & how they are processed is a decision one must choose wisely. Being unaware of what we do in life happens often. Blasted with deception I guess you could say. Being oblivious to yourself. It's hard to give a short answer (Laughs). It has great meaning. The name Splatter Guts merely comes from my love of Horror.

Is there a meaning behind the half skull make-up?

Of course. Again, for my love of Horror. Also... Half man, Half Monster. Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde I guess you could say. It relates to past experiences. The Man I am today & the monster I used to be. Even though I am not that monster I used to be anymore.... It is still something that haunts me & I will always have to live with. Nobody is perfect & we all

have skeletons in our closets. I have to remind myself of this & keep fighting it.

I've seen photos on line from a video shoot, what song is the video for? What is the back story of the video?

I don't wanna say yet what the song is. I am nowhere near famous or anything of that, but I still want to keep it secret until the video is released. The back story I can tell you. If you have seen the behind the scenes video that is out or seen pictures.... then you know it's all blood and gore (Laughs). Of course it's all about horror & killing & all that good stuff (Laughs). But it has to do with Splatter Guts the Monster going on a killing spree. Relating to the past in a metaphorical sense. Moral of the story is doing something you'll regret for the rest of your life. So there is good that comes from this video.

When do you feel a real relationship started with Christ Jesus in your life?

This is something I rarely speak of. To be completely honest... I never really thought of it. To the many times I repented & the first time I accepted Christ It never really felt real. It was a decision I made because I really truly believed. It has been an on & off thing since I first accepted. I guess if I had to say.... It would be recently I feel it's more real now than ever & that is only because of the music & lyrics I have been focusing on. It has kept me centered & given me a lot to think about.

What role does your faith play in your music?

Hmmmm.... How do I answer this with it making sense (Laughs)? The music revolves around my faith. Simple as that pretty much. What do you mean?

I think the simple answer is just fine. You mentioned a new album in the early stages and we talked about the video, so we covered what's coming up for you. Where can people find you, follow you, support you, and buy your music?

Ha Ha Cool Man. People can find me everywhere! If you're looking to download iTunes & Amazon is best. To order The CD & any merch go to Skyburnsblack.storenvy.com. If you order *To Hell & Back* you get a free poster & pins as well as other stuff with it. It's worth it to get the CD. Also find Blast from Oblivion on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, ReverbNation, Spotify, You Tube.....I think that's it (Laughs).

Any final thoughts?

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to interview Splatter Guts & Blast from Oblivion. Thanks to anyone who supports me. Keep Horror Alive & Stay Frightened!



CAST THE
DRAGON



Steve Ruff: With all the bands/projects you've been involved in, how was it being the sole member of CTD?

Joshua Lory: I had a great time working on the 10 demo songs by myself, playing everything, I got to spend time figuring out my singing voice and what I wanted to do forever. I've always been a fan of crooners, that's how I always sing when I'm alone. The style I was doing in Western Grace is pretty harsh on the vocal chords when you're not singing like that all the time, and that is tough to do without a band. I never had a group of songs come together so fast. But there was about a year's worth of study time put into the lyrics. I never prayed so much over an album in my life.

You've put out numerous albums of superb quality that run the gamut of styles and genres...what drew you to the horror punk style for this album?

I've always loved the musical vibe of Horror Punk, so many great vocalists out there and that's what I love most about it, guys that care about being singers with recognizable voices. And there's a huge lack of that in all punk these days. I always love it when punk gets artsy like the Damned, Misfits, Scattered Few, Bad Brains, and so on. I don't have to look at who I am listening to, I know because of the singer's voice. So good singing, not just yelling and being hardcore over that raw punk energy, that's what I wanted to do.

Did you get your new studio built?

Yes! I love it too! I turned an 8X10 TuffShed into a down to business work place. Sound proof, wood floors, all my gear is crammed in there. There's enough space to record drums and they actually sound great! I'm also running a new recording program called Presonus Studio 1, I enjoy it far more than ProTools.

I think I can guess, but there are definite influences on here, care to elaborate?

So musically... old Misfits, Ramones, and Iggy Pop also Michale Graves era Misfits, Blitzkid, Grave Robber. Lyrically... Daniel Amos, Crucified, Scattered Few, Saviour Machine, Ninja Scroll, and Destiny Lab.

How long did it take you to write these songs and get them recorded? What was the writing process like and who did you listen to and read to draw inspiration?

The writing and recording of the first 10 ones took about 3 weeks total, it just flowed, I felt very focused. When the album is released there will be 7 more songs, the old ones are being touched up with better musicians on drums and guitar.

Inspiration came from watching seminars or listening to

Internet radio, documentaries, and podcasts by Kent Hovind, Doug Hamp, Rob Skiba, Steve Quayle, Tom Horn, Trey Smith, and a few others. The documentaries *Age of Deceit* 1 and 2 are really great, a lot of good stuff from the Christian Truth movement. There's a real coming out of the Matrix feel going on, it's refreshing. Rob Skiba's books *Babylon Rising* and *Archon Invasion* are great reads. I really delved into the Bible, I have a grasp on the Old Testament like I never had before. Also, the *Book of Enoch and Jasher* really clear up a lot of things concerning the supernatural world surrounding us. The rap group Destiny Lab and Ninja Scroll were also inspirational.

What is it about the 'horror' punk genre that really catches you?

When I first got into it was because I was a horror movie fan and that was about it. I've come to realize the genre can be used to talk about real life horror, that's why I think the Christian Horror Punk scene works so well. We're coming at you with the brutal reality of this world and giving hope in our savior Christ Jesus.

What do you say to detractors who seem to always believe that this type of music and the visual aspects of this music are less than 'wholesome'? You know the ones, imagery is evil, etc...

Evil is what you make it. Lucifer was an angel, he will come to you as beauty and light, that's how he deceives. These same people find the suit and tie respectable dress, but we know the evil that can dwell there. I feel if someone believes evil will come as something ugly and vile, they will be the first deceived by the Antichrist. We as Christians are to fear no evil, so what are they really afraid of? It's all about being culturally relevant if we want to reach the unsaved. I'm trying to reach people that have let a lot of darkness in their lives, dabbled in witchcraft and the occult and let the demons in. I want to let them know the true freedom they can find in our Father. People those detractors wouldn't give the time of day.

Having said that, Christian bands really need to study up on symbolism, there's some straight up creepy occult stuff on so many album covers with no explanation other than the thought it looked cool. We need to make what we have appealing to the world without becoming worldly ourselves. Stop trying to "Christianize" ungodly things, my God will reject it like the golden calf in Exodus. That's how we get out of the mental aspect of Babylon.

Now I think music is a different thing. Music controls our emotions. Some people think punk and metal is evil because of the feeling it gives them, but I feel relaxed while listening to that style. It's all about the message of the bands I listen to and it's getting less and less secular. I've got enough Christian music to listen to that, and only that.

Now, music that angers me to a violent state is Dave Matthews Band; no joke, my blood boils to that jam band stuff, and it's supposed to be all about peace and love, so what is it that makes me react that way to that music? Maybe I've got a warrior soul and the heavy fast stuff is my beat, maybe someone has a comforting soul and likes something else, I don't know....

Talk to me about the lyrics and what compelled you to write about the subject matter...what are the different themes you take on, and why are those so important in your view? (...I know when we were talking at one point you referenced the lyrics and their meanings, do you think it has come to a point in 'Christendom' (or culture as a whole) where people need to be awakened out of their apathy, and 'blunt' lyrics are a vehicle to do that?)

First and foremost in my life I started over in a spiritual sense. The Gnosticism and various other philosophies I tried meshing with Christianity were not working. The focus of these things were all on self, me being my own god, not submitting to the one true God of Abraham, Moses, and Joshua. I really got biblical on this, I got supernatural and I try to expose the occult and witchcraft going on behind the scenes of our daily lives. The Great Deception is all encompassing especially in all forms of media. I talk about Nephilim and Fallen Angels, trans-humanism, secret societies, as well as some straight praise and worship songs. There's a lot going on in a short amount of time.

As far as waking people up, I'm here to plant seeds. I hope something in the lyrics catches the listener's attention and they start to research and crawl down every rabbit hole. Don't take my word on anything, look into it for yourself! I've come to realize that people come to these things on their own for different reasons and wind up seeing the synchronicity in everything in our lives.

It's a fact people worship Lucifer, people worship Moloch, and other false gods. They perform all types of heinous acts on children and the innocent. And just as Alister Crowley and Anton LeVay predicted, it's all coming out in the open. These subjects are important to me because there are people that worship an evil master, the Father of Lies, and these are not just the average metal head or goth kid... these are the famous, the billionaires, and political leaders, people in power and that power came from Satan. People sell their souls and sacrifice their loved ones to gain this power, and the Christian voice is silenced by 501c3 government run churches.

I know I may lose friends over this, but I want to be a biblical Christian, not a worldly one. I do not want to impress the world with joining into whatever PC crap is being pushed by a bunch of Luciferians running the media. You can be a fruitful Christian and still be biblical.

The attitude in this country is sick to me, the attitude of the majority of those claiming Christ sickens me. People are dying because they don't have food, water, and shelter, every creature on the planet deserves these things. These people aren't in their situation because they don't practice "the Secret", they are there because of tyrannical people running their lives. Now go back and think of all the "progressive" arguments the 'merican Christian is going on and on about, who gets the cake they want!?!? I'll tell you who didn't get cake or anything to eat for that matter, the hungry, the poor, the oppressed! These people are heroes to me surviving day after day under true oppression! I can't sit back and even say someone is brave anymore because they don't like who they are and want to cut off their jimmy! I feel for these people and their pain of identity, that's the oppression our country puts on us, but these issues are petty in comparison to someone dehydrating to death! It's 2016, we know how to get clean water, where it needs to go, we know how to grow food naturally in any climate using greenhouses, etc.

I get why God laughs at the enemy, because it's so much time and work against Him and it's just going to fail so miserably. I think of all the broken electronics I've owned and had to replace, or all the crappy cars I've had to constantly maintain, and that's all Trans-humanism is going to be; you'll want to die, but be forced to maintain a new type of addiction, Satan loves to create addictions for us. In my opinion we are knee deep in mystery Babylon and people need to know! Worship the Creator, not the creations.

One more thing I want to address is the rise of the occult happening in America, and by the way, this was never, ever a true Christian nation. Again, Christian's should study symbolism, that's how the enemy communicates right out in the open. They know the average Joe or Jane are not going to take the time to know what symbols mean. Christians also need to study symbolism to stop using pagan symbols daily in their lives. Can we just stop glorifying and making excuses for evil?!?! These symbols have power, even if you're not believing in them, they still affect your life and those around you. This is the mystery religions and secrets passed on by the fallen angels. All over our states, especially the east coast, are temples, monuments, statues, etc all glorifying the "gods" and the Pagan deities of old, and so few Christians know about it or even care.

Right now they (NWO) are doing all they can to make true Bible believing followers of Christ Jesus to look like we are slowing their "progress", and in a sense we are by saying 'no thanks' to what they offer. But we're not stopping them. Our un-involvement should not effect their lives aside from being a little salty and tossing a warning at someone. You'll never see a Bill Nye or Neil Degraass Tyson saying these monuments to Baal are silly ancient religions that are

slowing their "progress", nope not a word spoken. Why? Because Baal is their worshipful master! Them not doing that or going at any other religion aside from Christianity as a threat, is honestly helping prove the Truth we believe!

Can we get a bit personal? I've known you for a long time brother, been with you through many phases of our ever evolving search for truth and knowledge, and I am curious as to where you are in your spiritual beliefs as it relates to the world inside of you, and ultimately, outside of you as well?

Since you know me better and things of my past I won't talk about in an interview, you'll be able to understand the huge impact this has had on me. My more liberal friends may like me less and think I'm crazy, and that's fine, and though I don't totally align with right wing politics, I find my conservative friends to be more accepting of where my faith lies. My anarchist friends are cool with whatever!

A little over a year ago I went through what I call 'spiritual rock bottom'. I felt myself being pulled in all directions from my universal beliefs and trying to soak in all the insanity I knew of in the world. I didn't understand who Adonai is, or who Yeshua is, and I was on a journey of trying to justify every excuse of my worldly ways as I could. My mentality of the Bible being written by flawed men, that there was a God of the Old Testament different from the new, just all this BS coming at me and I went agnostic for a while, maybe Atheist for a week or two, but God wasn't through with me.

During one of my late night YouTube rabbit hole crawls I came across a video that had some stuff by Kent Hovind. At first, my seasoned programmed mind thought the dude was lame and in the dark ages with his thinking, I didn't venture far enough into his seminar, but it got me thinking about God in a heavy way. I couldn't sleep that night and kept thinking about the things he was talking about pertaining to Creation, so I got out of bed and finished the snippet the guy had in his video. I researched more of Hovind's full videos and that really got me digging into the Bible and reading it in a whole new way. Then I stumbled on Trey Smith's Nephilim video and was blown away by that. These guys and others make me so proud to be a creationist and someone that is not afraid to talk about a different history of the earth, which has just as much, and I'd say more, actual scientific evidence to back us up. Go watch some of Hovind's debates against evolution at major schools, he tears them apart, sometimes taking on 3 guys at once.

I gave myself as a vessel to be used by God for his purpose and that has led me down the most incredible journey of spiritual and self-discovery I have ever been on. I just turned 40 and I'm revitalized with the Holy Spirit, I have discernment, wisdom and knowledge. I work on being fruitful a lot even though that is very hard for me. You

combine that with the 10 commandments, and to me it's we should not murder instead of kill, because I feel if I kill someone defending my family, it's justified and not a sin, those 9 fruits, those 10 commandments, and receiving Christ Jesus as your messiah.

Things are good. I've never prayed more, I've never studied more, I've never tried living it more than I am now and I say why not?!?! What's holding us back! You want punk rock, want the system to hate you? Follow Christ, follow the Bible that you read and understood on your own... this is it! So the Gnostic thing, doing mushrooms in my 20's, and The Secret; all that stuff for me was about ego, trying to bring Adonai down to my level. It's taught the opposite, it's taught that you ascend to be a god, part of the great deception right there in Genesis.

What I don't see people asking is, why or where, is Christianity and God failing them? Well, people need to ask what they want from God. Also, are you worshiping the God of the Bible? Lucifer has his claws in the Church, all types of evil spirits running wild in "christian" churches around the world. The trend I see with a lot of musicians who walk away from their faith, if they truly had it at all, and I don't find a lot of them being honest about why they got into the Christian music industry. They wanted to make it, they wanted to be rock stars and they wanted to make a career out of it. That didn't happen so they based their faith on the ways of man and walked away. On the flip side of that, a lot of bands that did make it gave up the gospel and hid it. They don't want to upset anyone, don't rock the boat, just blend in and deny it. Then Jesus becomes "The Light" and God is "the Universe".

When I asked myself that, the next thing in my mind was, "What are you really doing for God?" There I have it... I'm a horrible witness, I've never led anyone to Christ Jesus, and at the least I've maybe helped a brother or sister in their walk. I haven't had that in my life until recently, but that's all online relationships, so that in itself can be a downer. I've taken in all the unnatural world has to offer me, it left me with a hardened heart. I went through my walk of faith very alone until recently. I'm getting my priorities straight. I want to represent the Kingdom of Heaven. Yeshua still loves all those that fell away and waits for their return!

There are a lot of BIG MOVEMENTS happening in Christianity right now. It's good deep stuff and most of it has a lot to offer, from the Hebrew Roots folks, to the revival of the Orthodox, the Christian Truthers and the small church revival. However, for me, with the two I first mentioned, you have Zionist and Catholic ties. I have nothing against the Catholic brothers and sisters, but I'm against the Vatican and all it stands for, and I'm not falling in love with the new Pope at all. When you do your actual research and not listen to the nightly news, you'll see the Antichrist words flow from

his mouth. Research the Jesuits, but come to your own conclusions, those are mine. The Roots movement is really getting down with leaving Babylon and I back that 100%; however, the research I've done on Zionism and what's happening in Israel and Palestine... I'm on the fence, both sides of that conflict are in the wrong if you ask me, and you can't be out of Babylon with Zionist ties! A lot of the "New Age" has crept into the Church and the Truther movement, everything gets infiltrated so test everything with the Bible, if it doesn't hold up you don't need it.

The first album was amazing, a true throwback to music ala the Misfits...with the second album in the works, tell me how far along you are to completion and who the guest musicians will be?

So the first album you heard I consider a demo now, those songs are being reworked and rerecorded a bit with better drums and guitar from some of my influences! Jim Chaffin will be bringing the old school fury on drums, and Wretched from Grave Robber is playing guitar and back ground vocals! I have a couple other people I want to ask but haven't done so yet. Both are named Mike and play Rock-A-Billy really well. I've got 2 country/Billy songs and a Surf instrumental I'd love to get those dudes on! The other 4 new songs are some of the best hardcore I've ever written! I reworked a BF Thunder song and an old Outpour song to be played how I wanted them, in fact, I may reclaim a few more for future releases. This will be out by September I hope!

You got picked up by Sky Burns Black records, how did that come about?

When I started this project I did it in the hopes that either Thumper Punk or Sky Burns Black Records would pick me up. In the meantime I was going to release the songs 1 or 2 at a time as I finished them. I have a song titled "To Hell and Back," and I was going to title the album that, so I did Google search to see if anyone had that title in recent years. Well, lo and behold, a one man Christian Horror band called Blast from Oblivion released an album the year before with the same title, and he was on one of the labels I was wanting to be on. In addition, we also share a birthday and that's that synchronicity thing happening, God sometimes lays it out so smooth. So I checked out BFO and really dug what he was doing. It was totally different sounding than my stuff, and I thought that was rad for the Horror scene in general. After I posted a few songs on BandCamp I hit up BFO on their FaceBook page, let him know I was a fan, and sent him a link to my stuff and a little bit of what I was about. We got to talking, one thing led to another, then Joshua Sky from Sky Burns Black hit me up on FB and here we are today.

I'm on a legit punk/metal label, a legit Christian label, and I signed the same type of contract I would have written

myself! Josh puts himself out there for his bands, label, and ministry. He's really a great guy and I feel so blessed to be on the label with a bunch of awesome bands! I've even got back into metal more because of it! He's got an amazing artist named Dave Besanson doing the cover, the album title is *Scream out His Name*, and there is a free download of the demo of the title track at the SkyBurnsBlack bandcamp site.

How did you manage to get Shawn 'Wretched' Browning from Grave Robber and Jim Chaffin on board?

I've dreamt of playing Punk Rock with Chaffin since I was 15! It was so awesome when I worked with him on *PTSD*, and I wanted to do that again. I saw a video Jim posted of himself tracking drums at home for the new XL album, and was like, "Oh snap! Chaffin can track at home now! I gotta get him on Cast the Dragon and go all out!" I prayed about it, asked him, he liked the stuff and that was that! Wretched had heard the 10 song demo and hit me up after listening to it so he could be on the next thing I did. I posted on FB I needed a guitarist and he volunteered! So the grace fell upon me and I am humbled to have these men on my album!

Are your guests also writing with you or did you write the material all yourself?

This was all me this time, again I feel so blessed how this all came together so easily!

Thanks for taking the time to do this interview my friend, any parting words?

I want to encourage everyone to try to put God first in their lives; give yourself completely to Him, trust Him, listen to Him, walk with Him... it is an amazing path once you're truly on it.

Cast the Dragon
facebook.com/Cast-The-Dragon-868590193188817/

Sky Burns Black Records skyburnsblack.storenvy.com
skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com

LSU/Lifesavers
facebook.com/LSUnderground-LifesaversLSU-1607313952916906/

Young Earth Records
youngearthrecords.bandcamp.com

Illuminati Food Pyramid (my new SkaPunk studio project)
facebook.com/illuminatifoodpyramid/

Brian Godawa's The Dragon King

Interview by Mike Indest

I've been enthralled with Brian Godawa's book series *Chronicles of the Nephilim*. I reviewed his latest book in the series *Jesus Triumphant* for Down the Line and was really looking forward to the next book in the series and was surprised that his latest book was not the next in the *Chronicles of the Nephilim* series but the first book in a new series. The new book is called *The Dragon King* and the new series is the *Chronicles of the Watchers*. Since I reviewed the last book, I thought an interview would be in order to catch up with Brian.

Mike Indest: Brian, the new book *The Dragon King* starts a new series. Why did you feel it was the right time to start a new series?

Brian Godawa: *The Chronicles of the Nephilim* was based on the premise of retelling all the stories in the Bible where giants appeared or were crucial to the theological War of the Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman. In that series, I included the "Watcher Paradigm," that is, the understanding of Deuteronomy 32:8-10 and Daniel 4 and 10, where the nations are ruled over by supernatural divine beings or "gods," by the decree of God himself. *Chronicles of the Watchers*, then focuses on stories that may carry that paradigm into the Gentile nations to show how that spiritual reality may look in what is normally the unseen realm of history.

The Dragon King actually started out as a standalone story about the first emperor of China from a spiritual perspective. It wasn't until we were developing the story that we realized that this would fit perfectly into the Watcher Paradigm and warrant its own series.

So what is the setting and basic plot of this story and why did you think this was an important story to tell?

It's 220 B.C. The ancient Western Empire is crumbling. In a desperate bid to save his throne, the Greek king over Babylon sends his son, Antiochus, a dishonored warrior, into the mysterious land of the Far East to capture a mythical creature that will give him absolute power: a

dragon. What he finds is an exotic world ruled by a brutal emperor on a mad quest to find the elixir of immortality.

We wanted to write this story because we had discovered certain historical oddities surrounding the first Emperor of China, Ch'in Shir Huang Di (or Huang Di), that were significant from a Christian perspective.

First, was that before Huang Di, the Chinese people worshiped a single God, they called Shang Di, without images. This was very peculiar because there was no other religion on the face of the earth that did that, except one: the Jews. Yet, the Chinese had no known connection to the Jews. So where did that come from? Some argue that the Chinese people came from the Tower of Babel incident and kept the knowledge of the past in a less corrupt form than other pagan cultures did.

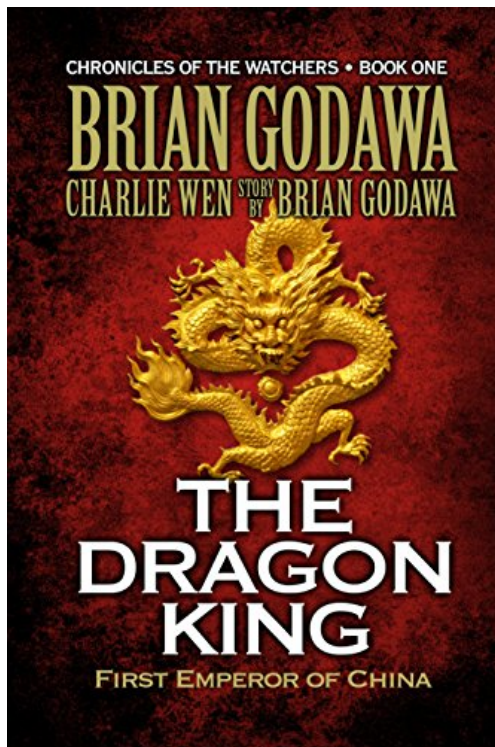
Another fascinating evidence of this possibility is that the ancient Chinese language is a pictographic language, whose

words reflect some of the spiritual truths of the book of Genesis, a thousand years before Genesis was written.

The Watcher paradigm comes in with the fact that the emperor banished the worship of Shang Di, and the worship of the "lesser gods" began around this time.

This was also the time period where the Dragon became a ubiquitous symbol of China. From a Christian perspective, the Dragon is Satanic, so it makes spiritual sense to see a bigger picture here of the very kind of supernatural gods of nations that are bent toward deception and evil.

But of course, that's only the tip of the ziggurat of fascinating facts and myths we found.



The book is credited to you and Charlie Wen. Is this a co-write? What started this partnership?

Charlie was the co-creator of the visual development department at Marvel Studios. We met at church. He enjoyed my Nephilim series and I LOVED his illustration for Marvel movies like The Avengers, Captain America, Thor and others. Charlie and I had been talking about working on a project together. We both come from the movie industry. He told me that he had always wanted to tell the story of the first emperor of China, because of his heritage. When I

heard how “Game of Thrones” Huang Di’s life was, I knew this would be a fascinating story. As we did research, we realized that if we created this first as a movie, the likelihood was very high that Hollywood would strip out the most important spiritual truths we had discovered and layered into the story, so we decided to write the novel first and get our version out there no matter what.

This book is just as fast paced and suspenseful as any of the *Chronicles of the Nephilim* books and reads like an action movie. I know you are a screenwriter and now are working with Charlie Wen, (Co-founder/Head of Visual Development for Marvel Studios) on this project.

Are you pitching this to movie production companies, or is this just the way you like to write?

We will try to pitch it to Hollywood companies because there is a BIG interest in anything Chinese, and ours is an East meets West story. But it’s not a kind of story that makes one culture superior to another. Rather, it compares and contrasts the good and bad of both kingdoms by the standards of a higher kingdom than both.

Were there any surprises you came across while researching and writing this project?

Yes, and unfortunately, I can’t tell you the best two surprises because they are tied to the very surprise solution of the whole story. We had a conundrum to solve of two MAJOR plot points that would embody the theme of the entire story. When we did more research to find an answer, we discovered another Biblical connection that not only answered the plot, but exploded the theme with rich and truthful imagination. I will only say this: One could say that this story is like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in China. But it’s not about the Ark itself.

You’ve had commercial success in both the “Christian” world and in the mainstream. Do you have any advice or words or encouragement for Christians trying to make an impact and achieve success in the mainstream world?

The secular world of entertainment is still very anti-Christian. Sure, there are some who aren’t. But they are by and large hostile to the Gospel, because of its moral demands and authority. So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. You must find your voice somewhere between preacher and coward and trust God to protect you as you obey his voice, not the winds of cultural acceptance. Place Jesus first in your heart, not your work, your success or fame. Be sure to be accountable and plugged into Christian fellowship at a church for empowerment. And don’t be afraid to speak “true truth” to power.

So what is next, book two of *Chronicles of the Watchers* or

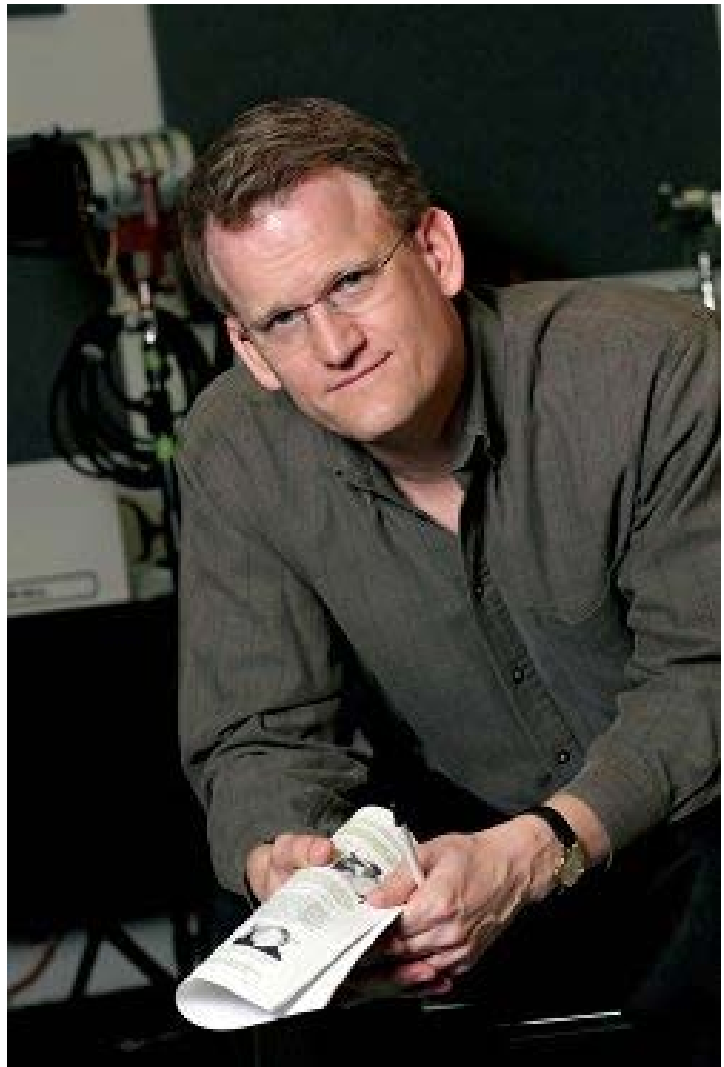
book nine of the *Chronicles of the Nephilim*?

As I said, *The Dragon King* can stand alone as a novel. So I am taking a break from it to write my next series, my magnum opus, *Chronicles of the Apocalypse*, a series about the apostle John writing the Book of Revelation in the first century during the Neronian persecution of Christians. Everything you know about the End Times will change. This ain’t your father’s *Left Behind*.

And there will be Watchers. It really is the sequel to the *Chronicles of the Nephilim*, but you can read it separately from that series.

How can people get a hold of your books and find out more about what you are doing?

All sold exclusively at Amazon in paperback, kindle and audiobook. Godawa.com has tons of cool artwork, videos, fascinating articles and detailed information. Sign up for the *Godawa Chronicles Newsletter* for special articles, discounts and opportunities for fans only.





Steve Hindalong Sings Out Like Neil Young on Solo Album *The Warbler* | 2016 Galaxy21 Music | shop.thechoir.net | Steve Hindalong is a human who seems to really like other humans. He respects and pays careful attention to their humanness, as well as to his own. This empathetic eye guides the emotional journey of *The Warbler*. Doubt, resolve, pain, illness, recklessness, joy, grief, comfort, true friendship – these show up all over the album, not as topics but as shared experiences, sung with the authority not of a teacher but of an ordinary practitioner.

As such, most of the songs on *The Warbler* explore the varieties of friendship in some respect. These range from the frank conversation of fellow religious pilgrims on “Unparalyzed” (But I’m not gonna shut my mind/And I will not close my eyes...Your faith is dark if it makes you cruel), to expressions of deep bonds with spouse and family on “Cloudburst,” “That’s How It’s Gonna Be,” and “For A Lifetime” (So forgive me for being irrational or indiscreet/I’m only gonna love you until my heart won’t beat).

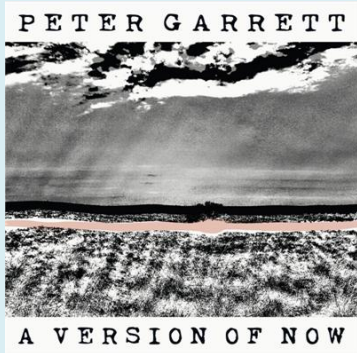
These songs also recognize the need we each have to be a friend to ourselves. This friendship may take the form of self-care and a stand against the unkind voices in our own souls, as on “Outta My Mind” (I’m gonna ride a gondola/To the top of a Swiss mountain/Where the cowbells ring for miles around/I’m gettin’ outta my head before I go outta my mind) or “Lucky And Blessed” (But there comes a time you surely should/Sock that dragon in the eye and say/Hey, there’s room for me in the glorious sky/I won’t be denied/I will not be denied/Gonna flap my wings and fly). Or, it may consist simply in telling our stories as honestly as possible; “Into The Drink” is neither a sermon nor a cautionary tale, but rather an unflinching description of what it’s like to be hell-bent on getting drunk out of one’s senses (Less of a romp than a journey/More of a quest than a lark/I’m goin’ down deep in a hurry/Into the merciful dark...Tonight I’m diving into the drink).

But Hindalong also has a history of writing specific songs for specific friends, and he continues this practice on *The Warbler*. So, what kind of song do you write when your friend is going blind? Hindalong writes “Jimmy A.,” a song about smoking hand-rolled cigarettes on the roof of an RV and eating sardines from a can while your friend plays guitar. Because that’s what you do when your friend is impossibly ill—you get together and do the good things that friends do together. In “Shellie’s Song,” the grief and helplessness we’ve all felt over a friend’s cancer is broken, briefly, by Christy Byrd’s announcement that Skinny has been just around the corner, shaking his tambourine. It doesn’t feel like a juxtaposition, really; tears to laughter to tears again is the natural progression of living. Sometimes, hope just means the expectation that laughter will come around again.

When it comes to the music itself, *The Warbler* is a bit like an Alan Parsons Project collection—not in terms of specific sounds used, but in terms of execution. The music ranges from lush singer-songwriter fare to moodier tracks reminiscent of The Choir to (slightly) harder-edged alternative rock. Hindalong is a producer as well as a songwriter, and this is the work of a great producer dedicated to getting the best performances for each song (even though Skinny himself doesn’t take a production credit on the album). While Hindalong writes and sings (like Neil Young, even if not as good) on every track, the other players and instruments have been selected on the basis of their suitability for that particular task, and Hindalong assembles quite the flock of friends for this musical flight (Marc & Christy Byrd, Matt Slocum, The Prayer Chain, Tim Chandler, Lynn Arthur Nichols, and Phil Madeira, amongst others). Of course, Christy Byrd’s vocals ‘steal the show’ every time they show up, which they thankfully do on more than half the songs. The liner notes narrate the album’s journey from studio to studio, detailing who plays what on what and why.

Moreover, both the opening and closing tracks offer ‘fly-on-the-wall’ snippets. “Unparalyzed” opens with Wayne Everett picking out the melody on a music box and commenting on the difficulty of said task, then ends with Hindalong telling a story about Chris Colbert breaking his wrist. “The Antithesis Of Blue” from Shadow Weaver shows up here as a ‘live’ piece, complete with Hindalong practicing a vocal line, checking to make sure engineer Matt Odmark is ready to record, then later calling out solos for Nichols and Jimmy Abegg. With some artists, this inclusion of studio chatter comes across as gimmicky and distracting, but here it sounds like a genuine invitation into the process that delivered the music, as well as into enjoyment of the final product.

The Warbler matches the emotional punch and superb lyricism of Hindalong’s previous solo album, *Skinny*, and even ups the ante with more musical friends and an expanded musical palette. The music will sound familiar enough to those acquainted with The Choir or The Lost Dogs, but it stands out from those efforts in its use of piano/keys, a brighter and more forward mix, and of course, Steve Hindalong’s voice taking the lead on every track. It’s deep. It’s funny. It’s quotidian. And it’s reassuring in its humanness. (Craig E. Bacon)



Peter Garrett | *A Version of Now* | 2016 Independent | petergarrett.com.au | During the 2002 'Capricornia' tour, Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett announced to his bandmates he was retiring. After many years of being an activist and voice for political and social justice, he had decided to actually seek government office.

He was successfully elected as a representative and held several positions from 2004 through 2013, when he resigned without seeking reelection. His time in office, which included environmental and educational issues, was not without controversies. This can be said of most public servants, but perhaps his previous status as a finger-pointing rock star made him a larger target.

2016. A reflective Garrett is writing his memoir, and during a rush of creativity begins to write songs. One thing led to another and he was in the studio recording *A Version Of Now*.

First things first. Peter's voice. It's an acquired taste, and if you never cared for it, this record won't change that. I love his distinctive sound myself, and it's good to hear it ringing just as strong as ever.

Does it sound like a new Midnight Oil record? Not really. Although Oils guitarist Martin Rotsey is on board, the rest of the players are pulled from various Australian bands and bring their own sounds with them. It's not nearly as layered as the last few Oils albums – it has a simplicity and immediacy to it that strongly lend to the 'Now' feel Peter claims he wanted. It has at times a reckless, or better yet, 'carefree' sound. It is a rock record, from the loping bass line of 'Tall Trees' to the driving beat of 'Kangaroo Tail', but not as intense a landscape as a typical Midnight Oil outing. Frequently throughout the album are the background vocals of Peter's daughters, which is a surprisingly nice touch.

Lyricaly, Peter does indeed talk about what 'Now' means to him. He talks about his time in politics on 'I'd Do It Again':

I didn't Jump I wasn't pushed
I went of my own accord to do what I could
I got my hands dirty I had a go
To try and even up the score
I had to leave the show

The refrain of the song repeats unapologetically 'But if I ever went around I'd do it again'

There are frequent references to his wife, including the love song 'My Only One.' Peter seems to be a man reinvigorated, not sitting on past laurels, but ready for the next chapter in his life. He sings of a better world on 'It Still Matters' and he often touches on his pride of being Australian, along with several Aussie references that may leave you scratching your head. Take an elevator to 'that Woolies in the sky'? You can Google it, I suppose.

This record has a vibe to it... it truly seems to have been thrown together quickly to catch a sense of 'Now'... but that's a good thing.

Cons? It can be pretty wordy at times, and hard to keep up with, but that's a small complaint.

Do I recommend the album? Of course. Peter is one of my personal heroes, a man who put his money where his mouth is and came through the other side whole and still determined to 'breathe and be free.'

I think this record stands as being Peter's biggest plunge into songwriting, with Midnight Oil's Rob Hirst being the primary writer for Peter's voice for years.

Although I like *A Version of Now* quite a bit, I can't help feel some excitement that maybe it is leading to a new Midnight Oil record. The band has announced they will tour in 2017, so who knows? Wikipedia ages Peter at 63. Here's hoping that at least some of us have the same forward-looking zeal and energy at that age... or any age. (Dann Gunn)



And How | *Camouflage* | 2016 Independent | andhow1.bandcamp.com | Just when I started knowing some of the words and was able to sing along to some gems from And How's *Seven*, I received a notice that Sean Severson had released another album. I guess that should not come as a surprise since Sean's M.O. is to release an album every few months.

Before discussing the new record, some of my favorite And How tunes are on *Seven*, including the melancholy and beautiful "The Caving In" and the perfect song for driving around on one of those introspective rainy days, "Lost On Me."

Sean gets a lot of play on my computer and iPhone these days since he consistently puts out some well written and well produced albums (and gives them away for free). The fact alone that he isn't in the fundraising game keeps me engaged in what he's doing and focused on his art and his vision and not the weird relationships that happen sometimes in the Kickstarter era.

I've listened to the new record *Camouflage* a few times and enjoy it a lot. Stand out tracks for me so far are "Half Way," and "Day Be New."

Besides listening to great guitar tones and catchy melodies I think what really draws me in is that Sean sings about things I can relate to. There are few songwriters these days that I can still connect with and Sean always delivers something relatable and challenging.

If you are a fan of The Lemonheads, Toad The Wet Sprocket, The Gin Blossoms, Big Star, Elliot Smith, or you just enjoy great songwriting then head on over to andhow1.bandcamp.com and press play. (Mike Indest)



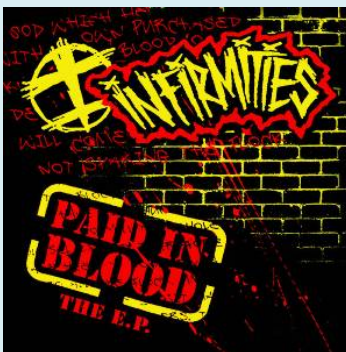
Jacob's Trouble | *25LIVE* | 2015 Independent | jacobstrouble.bandcamp.com | Having discovered "Christian Music" by my aunt's boyfriend handing over a cassette he'd made me of Daniel Amos *Horrendous Disc*, I had since been on the lookout for anything with the name "Terry Scott Taylor" printed on it.

When I came across this colorful album sporting strange song titles, Rickenbacker guitars and "produced by Terry Taylor," I quickly snapped it up. The album was called Knock Breathe Shine by a band called Jacob's Trouble. It blew my young mind with its cryptic wording, chime-dripping guitars, melodic vocals, and McCartney style bass playing. I wrote to the band, sent them my latest bedroom recorded mess-ter-piece and continued my obsession with my new favorite album.

About a week later I received a butter and tea-stained letter from Jerry Davison, soon followed by a letter from Mark Blackburn. I became and remained long-distance friends with these guys ever since.

When going backwards in their catalog I was kinda thrown by how blatantly Christian their lyrics were in their first album, *Door Into Summer*. I was expecting more of the artsy and poetic kinda thing that I was into at the time. The very 60's sound along with the catchy melodies are what hooked me, at first, to Door. There was something about the straightforwardness of the lyrics that made me uneasy, but in a way that also was a revelation to me. What Door taught me more than anything was to be who you are, express what you believe and let it all ooze out of you for all to see, if they care to look.

25 Live finds the JT boys, Mark Blackburn (guitars and vocals), Steve Atwell (Bass and vocals), and Jerry Davison (Vocals and drums)...well, 25 years later. Obviously they expressed who they were and what they believed when they were all in their mid 20's because the songs ring the same bell of conviction today. Both Pastor Blackburn and Davison are still very involved in the church and all 3 have kept their musical juices flowing. Steve played bass in a band "Janah", Mark made 2 solo albums and Jerry had a project called "Sideways 8". (Sean Severson)

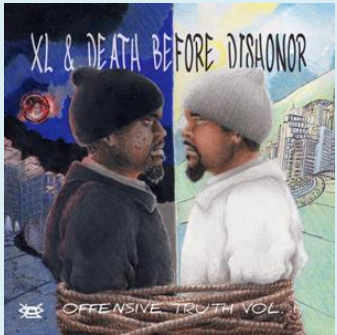


The live album features Jerry's son Eric on drums and guitar and Mark's son Nathan on guitar, mandolin, and pedal steel. Let's hope for an album of new songs from these boys in the future! (Sean Severson)

Infirmities | *Paid In Blood* | 2015 Sky Burns Black Records | infirmities-sbbr.bandcamp.com | This has been my favorite Christian Punk release since American Culture eXperiments! 8 tracks of legit Street Punk, played by real Punx, that are doing a real Street Punk ministry, and it all happens in under 8 minutes! Not a bad track on it. "Shadow Of The Cross," with its haunting chorus, is my favorite on here followed by "Brood Of Vipers" and "Infirmities Anthem." Infirmities could have come out during any period of Punk Rock and held their own. Each track blasts with a huge amount of energy, leaves you wanting more, you'll play it twice in a row! Glad to hear good bands that are unashamed of their faith in Christ Jesus and want to share his salvation with those that need to hear it! Having finished up a recent tour with HR of Bad Brains and a new album on it's way anytime, this is a band to keep your eye on, no doubt! (Joshua Lory)



Deni Gauthier | *Passenger* | 2016 Independent | denigauthier.bandcamp.com | This review is long over due. I didn't mean for it to be so delayed, but life got in the way. Which is a bit ironic in that the newest offering from Deni Gauthier, *Passenger*, is all about life getting in the way... in beautiful ways, in sad ways, and even in tragic ways. Deni says that the music on this album is stripped down compared to past albums, and that is true. But... somehow there are still so many layers to each song. You hear different little things each time you listen. Guitar parts that you didn't notice before, or drum fills that seem to come from nowhere. You almost feel like you are hearing a different album each time you listen. Or maybe a sequel to the last time you listened. For example, the guitar work in "Hurt Feelings" is particularly beautiful or melancholy depending on how you hear the song at any particular time. Or listen to the... I can't quite tell... three or four?... different guitar tones layered on top of each other in "Out of Touch Out of Luck." Each one brings out a different listening experience depending on which layer you connect with at any given time. If you wonder why people like the 77s and Chris Taylor are taking Deni out on their tours, you should check out this album right now. Stylistically, this is acoustic/folk/american music, a logical progression from Quiet Town, which itself began to step away from the more pop/rock music of his past work. Of course, with Deni sharing his past grunge rock demo on Instagram (BandCamp next?), we know the dude has a range of musical talents. Speaking of which, I should also note Deni's talent for adding complex vocals and lyrics to his songs. "Let Me Go" has a moving and fascinating interplay between Deni's vocal delivery and the clever lyrics. The same can be said about every song on this album. Oh, and "Dad's Song" is a tear jerker even if you just read the words alone, but the way Deni sings it takes it to the next level. Overall, a highly recommend album for fans of deep, personal acoustic music. (Matt Crosslin)



XL & DBD | *The Offensive Truth Volume 1 & 2* | 2016 | cdbaby.com/Artist/XLDeathBeforeDishonor | XL and DBD return with it's best release to date! Sodom and America is a personal classic for me. I loved the early days of what became Rapcore – it had yet to become THE big thing, ruined by over saturation by the MTV beast. Todd Stevens is one gifted individual, handling the bulk of the instruments on the album: crazy good lead guitar work, massive rhythms, Golden Age Rap flows that remind me of Big Daddy Kane and Ice Cube, as well as great vocals and harmonies reminiscent of King's X and Fishbone. These albums are in line and a step up from the prior XL and DBD albums! Great guest spots from Jesse Sprinkle, Jim Chaffin, Oz Fox, Jimmy Brown, Rex Carroll and more. GET BOTH ALBUMS! Each volume is as good as the other, lyrics are honest and challenging with a few fun songs for good measure. Wide range of subjects covered on here from addiction, to rape, to spiritual warfare, greed, politics, being a man, and really all these things are more linked than most tend to realize. Both albums are focused on Biblical truths. Production is huge! An excellent return, will easily be on my best of 2016 list! (Joshua Lory)



Metanoia | *Chili-Nation* | 2015 Thumper Punk Records | thumperpunkrecords.storenvy.com | Well-produced 90's style melodic Punk Rock. Fans of Pennywise, early Offspring, Ignite, Craig's Brother, and Dogwood should enjoy this. These guys nail the style as good as you can. I say 90's style, but it really is a timeless vibe of Punk. This is like the stuff I grew up on. 3 part sing along harmonies, big breakdowns, shred solos, lots of octaves on the guitars, solid musicianship, good PMA, Christ-centered lyrics. I'll have to go back and check out their first release sometime. If I still skated, I'd rock this for a session! Ted Bond of Craig's Brother has a guest spot. Go give it a listen at the Thumper Punk Bandcamp and see if you like it too! (Joshua Lory)



Saul of Tarsus | *Road to Damascus* | 2015 SkyBurnsBlack Records | skyburnsblack.storenvy.com | This album is an onslaught of melodic riffs, blasting beats, and throat wrenching vocals. I really enjoy their use of keyboards on the opening track "Fallen." The Jazz break in "World Flesh Devil" was reminiscent of the Refused, very cool and creative. "The Last Jihad" has an epic and memorable guitar riff that will get the kids or the kid in you in the pit! "No Treasure" is my favorite on the album, love the arrangement. Lyrics are on point, relevant, and Christ-centered. Solid release start to finish, adding a lot to the scene and the genres that Saul of Tarsus seamlessly blends together: Crust, Metal, Punk, and more! (Joshua Lory)



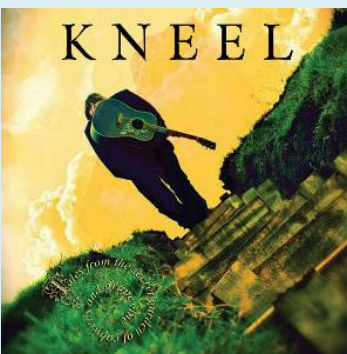
xDEFIANTx | *Fourth Plague* | 2015 On The Attack Records | ontheattackrecords.storenvy.com | On the Attack Records seems to be experts at digging up all of these old school hardcore bands. xDEFIANTx is the newest band on their roster, bring us their debut album *Fourth Plague*. The intensity, emotion, and energy of the old school are all here on this short album (or is it a long EP? Not sure). At times this gets close to crossover thrash, which is always a good thing in my book. Also a few hints of groove here and there, just to keep things a bit more on the interesting side. Another good entry to the On The Attack roster. (Matt Crosslin)



Mike Indest | *45* | 2015 Independent | mikeindest.bandcamp.com | Mr. Indest returns with a short but sweet two song ep. Set-up just like its namesake, you have an A-side and a B-side. However, both songs are stand-outs. Indest can still write some of the catchiest thought-provoking songs out there. Songs this good should be all over the charts, but radio's loss is your gain. Check this "single" out for free online today. (Matt Crosslin)



Swinery | *Swinery EP* | 2015 Sky Burns Black Records | skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com | Swinery produces some of the fastest death grind metal I have ever heard. There are ten songs on here, but most of them are in the 11-6 second range. Longest song is 45 seconds. Drums are so fast they must be programmed. But its not all speed and noise – "Hades" does slow things down enough to understand the words. This is specific music for extreme metalheads, but be sure to give it a chance if you like things extreme. This is about as extreme as it gets. (Matt Crosslin)



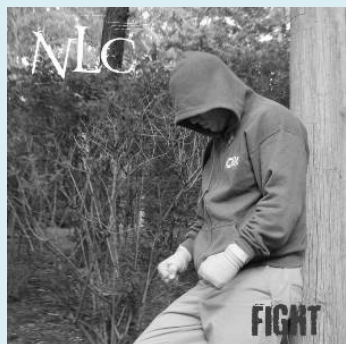
Kneel | *Tales from the Secret Garden of Cobwebs and Grapevine* | 2015 MMLJ Records | mmljrecords.bandcamp.com | I guess this is the season for surprising side-projects by Thumper Punk Records punk bands. This EP finds Neil Roddy from Ambassadors of Shalom veering decidedly into alt-rock territory for MMLJ Records. Most of the songs here take a serious, somber tone due to Roddy dealing with some heavy blows that life has recently dealt him. I can't find much online to see if this is band or one-person side project, but the sound is not acoustic folk. This is full band alt-rock that reminds me of Glower at times because of how well it blends 80s and 90s alternative sounds together. Something for those looking for a new and different band to check out. (Matt Crosslin)



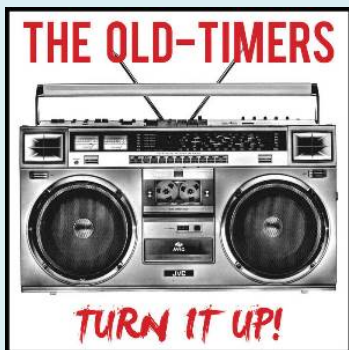
JohnnyBoy | *Innocent* | 2015 Thumper Punk | thumperpunkrecords.storenvy.com | JohnnyBoy is the lead singer of Thumper Punk's own The Way. This EP is a solo acoustic album that showcases his diversity. I'm not one to think that punk singers would be able to do acoustic albums well (even though many have)... but this is quite the impressive display of range here. Not "range" as in technical prowess necessarily, but as in the ability to stretch outside the comfort zone of your normal band. Six songs that are pretty much JohnnyBoy and his guitar (and occasional other percussion) sounding like a natural coffee house singer-songwriter. (Matt Crosslin)



Wicked's End | *Wicked's End* | 2015 Independent | wickedsend.bandcamp.com | Wicked's End is back! After returning to the faith and music several years ago, I have always wondered if Glenn Rowlands would resurrect the band that introduced most of us got to him. If you wondered the same thing, we now have that answer. This is probably the heaviest Wicked's End to date, residing generally in the “experimental crossover thrash” realm as their BandCamp site describes it. While this is a live demo recording, the sound quality is still really good. I’m hearing elements of classic thrash, death, black, and speed metal all nicely mixed together. Even a few nods to older Wicked's End songs (see the intro to “Theories of Lies” and the cover of their own “Truth Hurts”). I should note that this is technically a new band formed around Rowlands, but he seems to have found some talented metalheads to work with. Which is no small feat – that is a dying breed these days. Lyrically, this is straight up Christian extreme metal with conservative lyrics (so the more liberal readers should just be ready for that). Someone like Sky Burns Black should sign these guys right away. (Matt Crosslin)



No Lost Cause | *Fight EP* | 2015 Thumper Punk Records | thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com | 90’s influenced melodic Punk tinged with 3rd wave Ska. Production is all around good, has that old Fat Wreckords feel. Unashamed of faith, hope filled lyrics. Fans of Face To Face, Value Pac, Ghoti Hook, and O.C. Supertones will find a fast place in their collection for this album. The title track is my favorite on the E.P., gives more of a modern melodic Hardcore Punk feel to the E.P. Strong outing overall from No Lost Cause. The Rick Astley cover is a good time. Drop by on BandCamp and give it a listen! Support the underground! (Joshua Lory)



The Old-Timers | *Turn It Up* and *Turn It Off* EPs | 2015 Thumper Punk Records | thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com | Two awesome new EP’s from the Old-Timers, 4 songs each of pit friendly Punk, played the right way. The underground Christian Punk scene is starting to snowball in a good way, great bands popping up all over the place and others are starting to really hit their stride. Old-Timers were an instant favorite when I heard the Soli Deo Gloria LP, these EP’s are a step up! Guitars remind me of old 80’s O.C. Punk like D.I. and Adolescents, really cool, but drums, vocals, and bass are that brand of old school Hardcore Punk that can only come from the east coast, really tight rhythm section, where as O.C. Hardcore has that surf rock slop to it. One of the best bass players in the scene, dude rips. These guys could have come out in 1982 and fit right in with the best. Ninah Llopis of The Lead sings Guest Vocals on ‘Homeless Friends’. JCHC, PMA lyrics, get both of these EP’s! (Joshua Lory)



The Inhumans | *Walking Dead* Single | 2015 SkyBurnsBlack Records | skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com | Horror Punk in the vein of early Blitzkid with a bit of Street Punk mixed in, good energy, free download, the kids love the zombies. Look forward to hearing more from these guys! (Joshua Lory)



Blast From Oblivion | *To Hell And Back* | 2015 Sky Burns Black | skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com | In the darkest corners of Punk Rock sub genres you will find Horror Punk, a scene that has been around since Punk Rocks early beginnings with bands like the Damned, the Undead, and the Misfits. It’s one of my favorite sub genres because it has yet to be tainted by corporate hands. Most bands in the genre lack in the originality department and come off as Danzig and Michale Graves clones, while others like the short lived Pitch Black took it in a different direction with a Skate Punk vibe. The debut from Blast From Oblivion is an original, mixing elements of Street Punk and Thrash as well as some melodic Goth moments. Great album start to finish: driving beats, gruff vocals, lyrics are strong, good melodic guitar, all handled by one man named Splatter Guts, whom I think handled the production as well. Solid release from the Sky Burns Black label, look forward to hearing more from B.F.O. If you enjoy high octane Punk Rock, get this! (Joshua Lory)



Untitled by Rick McDonough